COMMENTS OF JOHN RUSKIN ON THE DIVINA COMMEDIA

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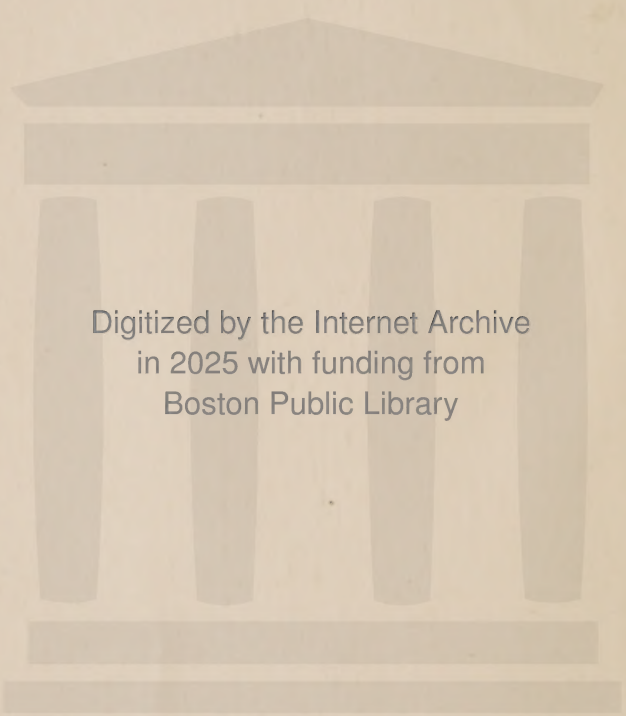
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COMMENTS OF JOHN RUSKIN ON THE DIVINA COMMEDIA

COMMENTS OF JOHN RUSKIN ON THE DIVINA COMMEDIA

COMPILED BY
GEORGE P. HUNTINGTON
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The first volume of "Modern Painters" was published in the year 1842. Ruskin tells us that he had not then become familiar with the "Divina Commedia." The earliest of his writings in which we find references to Dante are the second volume of "Modern Painters," published in 1845, and the three volumes of "The Stones of Venice," published in 1850 and 1852. The "Seven Lamps of Architecture," published in 1848, contains no allusions to the Divine Comedy. But in the forty or more volumes and smaller works issued between 1852 and 1886 quotations from Dante are very frequent.

In compiling the present volume the aim has been to include all the passages in Ruskin's writings in which reference is made to the "Divina Commedia," whether for the purpose of elucidating particular verses of the poem or special characteristics of the poet, or for that of enforcing an argument, or for the sake of poetic or historic illustration.

The selections form, it will be seen, an exten-

sive commentary on the poem. Of the "Inferno" all but two, and of the "Purgatorio" all but three of the cantos are referred to; and of the "Paradiso" more than one half.

The passages which relate to Dante himself and to the poem as a whole are placed first; and for convenience of reference they are grouped under several different headings.

References are given at the end of each canto to other parts of this volume where incidental allusions are made to the same canto.

Simple quotations and references without comment have been omitted. On the other hand, some passages from Ruskin's writings have been included which without referring expressly to any passage in the "Divina Commedia" yet treat of some name or word in it.

Some slight verbal changes have in a few cases been made without note, where the connection in the original context was of necessity broken.

As the quotations from Dante made by Ruskin do not always follow what are now considered the best texts, such quotations have been corrected by Casini's text (1899) in all important particulars.

The thanks of the compiler are due to Miss L. A. Paton for valuable assistance by work done in the Harvard Library.

There has hitherto been no complete uniform edition of Ruskin's works. Such an edition is now in process of publication, — in thirty-one volumes, — by George Allen, Ruskin House, London. The editors are E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn.

At present the best editions of "Modern Painters" and "The Stones of Venice" are issued by the above-named publisher. The Brantwood edition, published by Maynard, Merrill and Company, New York, with introductions by Professor Norton, includes in separate volumes sixteen of Ruskin's shorter and best known works, with the exception of "Unto this Last," "Mornings in Florence," etc.

October, 1903.

INTRODUCTION

No other great English writer has shown such familiarity with the "Divine Comedy" as Mr. Ruskin. The references to it scattered through his writings for many years exhibit its abiding attraction for him and its large share in the nourishment of his intellectual life, and when collected and arranged as in this little volume they form a comment on the poem, partial and irregular indeed, but of peculiar interest.

Mr. Ruskin was twenty-six years old before he became a student of Dante. It was during his visit to Italy, in 1845, that he first read the "Divine Comedy." Up to this time, he says he had never read a line of it, except the story of Ugolino.[1] But in a letter to his father in May of this year, from Lucca, he writes of the mode in which he spends his days, and says, "I return home as the lamps begin to burn in the Madonna shrines to read Dante and to write to you."[2]

[1] Epilogue to volume ii. of the edition in 1883 of *Modern Painters*.

[2] *The Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition, 1903, volume iv. p. xxx.

From this time, for many years, perhaps no book, with the exception of the Bible, was his more constant companion than the "Divine Comedy," either in the original or in Cary's well-known, and in many respects admirable, translation. He did not, however, at any time devote himself to the thorough study of Dante's works, and never made them the special subject of his writing. His references are practically confined to the "Divine Comedy," and his notes or comment upon it are incidental to the main topics of his discourse; but in drawing from it illustrations of his own themes, he interpreted it with insight and sympathy.

His genius was indeed intellectually far remote from that of Dante, but morally of a type closely akin. There was a similar mingling in both of sternness and of tenderness, of self-confidence and of humility; but the resemblances only accentuate the essential differences in their respective natures. The one was self-contained, concentrated, and supported by a steadfast religious faith; the other unrestrained, diffused, and lacking the support of fixed religious convictions. Dante won his way to Paradise: Ruskin did not even attain to the

Earthly Paradise upon the summit of the Mount of Purgatory. But Ruskin's unequalled observation of the aspects of nature deepened his appreciation of the truth and power of Dante's descriptions of the scenery alike of the actual and of the imagined world; his fancy was stimulated by the mystic symbolism of the "Divine Comedy," and his poetic sensibilities were quickened into poetic sympathies by the spirit with which the poem is inspired.

Ruskin was also qualified by experience as well as by genius, beyond most other men to interpret the "Divine Comedy;" yet in spite of the lessons of life and the teachings of Dante himself, he did not learn to control the waywardness of his temperament, or to balance and correct the force of immediate impressions by recollection or comparison. Some indeed of the notes in this volume give evidence of being written without due consideration. For instance, Ruskin does injustice to his appreciation of the significance of the poem in speaking of Dante's vision as "a dream in which every grotesque type of phantasy of heathen tradition is renewed and adorned, and the destinies of the Christian Church under their most sacred sym-

bols become literally subordinate to the power, and are only to be understood by the aid of one dear Florentine maiden" (page 18). Such a statement as this would in any other writer imply a strange misconception of the nature of the "Divine Comedy," but in Mr. Ruskin it is merely an illustration of preoccupation of mind with a single and partial aspect of a complex entity. The "one dear Florentine maiden" has nothing to do, as a Florentine maiden, with the destinies of the Christian Church. She is transmuted in the poem into a symbol of pure spiritual significance, and there is no stronger evidence of the power of Dante's poetic imagination and of the force of his character than that he was able, without incongruity, so to idealize the woman whom he loved as to make the transforming of her into the type of the revelation of Divine truth seem no unnatural or extravagant sublimation. In another mood, Mr. Ruskin would have been quick to recognize the misleading inaccuracy of his words in both the clauses of his sentence.

It is seldom that he falls into an error of mistranslation, but there is one instance which perhaps deserves notice, because it obscures a

passage of extraordinary beauty. In Virgil's words of farewell to Dante, two verses read in the original as follows: —

> Lo tuo piacere omai prendi per duce :
> Fuor sei dell' erte vie, fuor sei dell' arte,

and may be literally translated, "Henceforward take thine own pleasure for guide; thou art forth from the steep ways, forth art thou from the narrow;" but Mr. Ruskin supposed the word "*arte*" to have the meaning of *art*, and translated, "Thou art beyond the steep ways and beyond all art." He explains the verse as "meaning that the perfectly purified and noble human character, having no pleasure but in right, is past all effort and past all *rule*. Art has no existence for such a being." This interpretation seems to me forced and inconsistent with the preceding words, while if we take "*arte*" as an adjective with its significance of narrow, the meaning is simple and appropriate: "the steep and narrow ways" are those which the poet has traversed with effort and difficulty in his ascent of Purgatory; henceforth his path is easy. Moreover, the word "*arte*," in the sense of art, occurs in the next preceding line but one, and it was long since pointed out that

Dante in his whole poem never uses for a rhyme the same word in the same sense, except in the case of the name of Christ, and in two instances where special emphasis is laid upon the word.[1]

But whatever errors may be found in Mr. Ruskin's comments, or however fanciful some of them may be, his imaginative insight and his intense moral sentiment brought him into such sympathy with the poet that he entered deeply into the spiritual purport of the poem, and was thus enabled to reveal and illuminate the truth which often lies hidden within verses that to most readers seem simple narrative. There is no student of the "Divine Comedy" but will derive stimulating suggestion from these comments and be helped by them to read the poem with keener intelligence and fuller appreciation of its intent and significance.

C. E. N.

October, 1903.

[1] The name "Christ" is used four times as a triple rhyme. In the 20th Canto of Purgatory, the word "*ammenda*" is repeated three times as a rhyme, and in the 30th Canto of Paradise, the word "*vidi*" is thus repeated.

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I

DANTE

I THINK that the central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral, and intellectual faculties, all at their highest, is Dante.

Stones of Venice, vol. iii. sec. lxvii.

The great prophetic exponent of the heart of the Middle Ages.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 39.

Cast the fancy free in the spiritual world and faithfully follow out such masters of that world as Dante and Spenser.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. viii. sec. 7.

Nor can any Northern poet be set for an instant beside Dante as an exponent of Catholic faith.

Aratra Pentelici, Lect. vii. sec. 214.

The wisest man who has yet spoken on the [bars and doors of the prison in which human spirits dwell].

Fors Clavigera, xxiv.

We shall see by this light three colossal images standing up side by side, looming in their great rest of spirituality above the whole world horizon, Phidias, Michael Angelo, and Dante; and then, separated from their great religious thrones only by less fulness and earnestness of faith, Homer and Shakespeare; and from these we may go down step by step among the mighty men of every age, securely and certainly observant of diminished lustre in every appearance of restlessness and effort.

Modern Painters, vol. ii. I. ch. vii. sec. 5.

I admit two orders of poets, but no third; and by these two orders I mean the Creative (Shakespeare, Homer, Dante), and Reflective or Perceptive (Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson).

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xii. sec. 6, note.

Calling this penetrating, possession-taking faculty, imagination . . . every great conception of poet or painter is held and treated by this faculty. Every character that is so much as touched by men like Æschylus, Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare, is by them held by the heart; and every circumstance or sentence of their

being, speaking, or seeming is seized by a process from within, and is referred to that inner secret spring of which the hold is never lost for an instant; so that every sentence, as it has been thought out from the heart, opens for us a way down to the heart, leads us to the centre, and then leaves us to gather what more we may; it is the open sesame of a huge, obscure, endless cave, with inexhaustible treasure of pure gold scattered in it: the wandering about and gathering the pieces may be left to any of us, all can accomplish that; but the first opening of that invisible door in the rock is of the imagination only.

Hence there is in every word set down by the imaginative mind an awful under-current of meaning, and evidence and shadow upon it of the deep places out of which it has come. It is often obscure, often half told, for he who wrote it, in his clear seeing of the things beneath, may have been impatient of detailed interpretation, but if we choose to dwell upon it and trace it, it will lead us always securely back to that metropolis of the soul's dominion from which we may follow out all the ways and tracks to its farthest coasts.

I think the 'Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante' of Francesca da Rimini[1] and the 'He has no children' of Macduff, are as fine instances as can be given, but the sign and mark of it are visible on every line of the four great men above instanced.

Modern Painters, vol. ii. II. ch. iii. sec. 4, 5.

Another very important, though not infallible, test of greatness is, as we have often said, the appearance of Ease with which the thing is done. It may be that, as with Dante and Leonardo, the finish given to the work effaces the evidence of ease.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xvi. sec. 27.

The imaginative power always purifies; the want of it therefore as essentially defiles; and as the wit-power is apt to develop itself through absence of imagination, it seems as if wit itself had a defiling tendency.

In Pindar, Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Scott, the colossal powers of imagination result in absolute virginal purity of thought.

Fors Clavigera, xxxiv.

[1] *Inferno*, v. 138.

The kind of mental chemistry by which the dream summons and associates its materials, I have already endeavoured, not to explain, for it is utterly inexplicable, but to illustrate, by a well-ascertained though equally inexplicable fact in common chemistry. That illustration (§ 8 of chapter on Imaginative Association, vol. ii.) I see more and more ground to think correct. How far I could show that it held with all great inventors, I know not, but with all those whom I have carefully studied (Dante, Scott, Turner, and Tintoret) it seems to me to hold absolutely; their imagination consisting, not in a voluntary production of new images, but an involuntary remembrance, exactly at the right moment, of something they had actually seen.

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. ii. sec. 17.

Turner may be beaten on his own ground — so may Tintoret, so may Shakespeare, Dante, or Homer: but my *belief* is that all these first-rate men are lonely men; that the particular work they did was by them done forever in the best way.

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. xvii. sec. 51.

Striving to speak with uttermost truth of expression, weighing word against word, and wasting none, the great speaker, or writer, toils first into perfect intelligibleness, then, as he reaches to higher subject, and still more concentrated and wonderful utterance, he becomes ambiguous — as Dante is ambiguous, — half a dozen different meanings lightening out in separate rays from every word, and, here and there, giving rise to much contention of critics as to what the intended meaning actually was.

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. v. sec. 12.

Depend upon it, the first universal characteristic of all great art is Tenderness, as the second is Truth. I find this more and more every day: an infinitude of tenderness is the chief gift and inheritance of all the truly great men. It is sure to involve a relative intensity of disdain towards base things, and an appearance of sternness and arrogance in the eyes of all hard, stupid, and vulgar people — quite terrific to such, if they are capable of terror, and hateful to them, if they are capable of nothing higher than hatred. Dante's is the great type of this class of mind. I say the *first* inheritance is Tender-

ness — the *second* Truth, because the Tenderness is in the make of the creature, the Truth in his acquired habits and knowledge; besides, the love comes first in dignity as well as in time, and that is always pure and complete; the truth, at best, imperfect.

Two Paths, i. sec. 36.

Hence, I suppose that the powers of the imagination may always be tested by accompanying tenderness of emotion; and thus, (as Byron said,) there is no tenderness like Dante's, neither any intensity or seriousness like his, such seriousness that it is incapable of perceiving that which is commonplace or ridiculous, but fuses all down into its own white-hot fire.

Modern Painters, vol. ii. II. ch. iii. sec. 10.

For the standard theological writings, . . . I have chosen seven authors, whose lives and works, so far as the one can be traced or the other certified, shall be, with the best help I can obtain from the good scholars of Oxford, prepared one by one in perfect editions for the St. George's schools. These seven books will contain, in as many volumes as may be needful, the lives

and writings of the men who have taught the purest theological truth hitherto known to the Jews, Greeks, Latins, Italians, and English; namely, Moses, David, Hesiod, Virgil, Dante, Chaucer, and, for seventh, summing the whole with vision of judgment, St. John the Divine.

Fors Clavigerâ, lxi.

The testimonies of the Lord. Which are sure, — making wise the simple.

These are what He has told us of His law, by the lips of the prophets, — from Enoch, the seventh from Adam, by Moses, by Hesiod, by David, by Elijah, by Isaiah, by the Delphic Sibyl, by Dante, by Chaucer, by Giotto. Sure testimonies all; their witness agreeing together, making wise the simple — that is to say, all holy and humble men of heart.

Fors Clavigera, lxxv.

There are certain men who *know* the truths necessary to human life; they do not 'opine' them; and nobody's 'opinions,' on any subject, are of any consequence opposed to them. Hesiod is one of these, Plato another, Dante another, Carpaccio is another.

Fors Clavigera, lxxi.

The fourteenth century is preëminently the age of thought. It begins with the first words of the poem of Dante; — and all the great pictorial poems — the mighty series of works in which everything is done to relate, but nothing to imitate — belong to this century.

Lectures on Architecture and Painting, iii. sec. 83.

With the history of the five cities, I wish you to know also the opinions, on all subjects personally interesting to you, of five people who lived in them; namely, of Plato, Virgil, Dante, Victor Carpaccio (whose opinions I must gather for you from his paintings, for painting is the way Venetians write), and Shakespeare.

Fors Clavigera, xviii.

Shakespeare and Chaucer, — Dante and Virgil, — Horace and Pindar, — Homer, Æschylus, and Plato, — all the men of any age or country who seem to have had Heaven's music on their lips. *Time and Tide*, xvii.

I am quite unable to say to what extent my thoughts have been guided by Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Helps; to whom (with Dante and

George Herbert, in olden time) I owe more than to any other writers.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. app. iii.

It is worth noting as one of the tricks of the third *Fors* — the giver of names as well as fortunes — that the name of the chief poet of passionate Italy should have been 'the bearer of the wing,' and that of the chief poet of practical England, the bearer or shaker of the spear. *Fors Clavigera*, xv.

The loveliest pieces of Christian language are all in ryme — the best of Dante, Chaucer, Douglas, Shakespeare, Spenser, Sidney.

On the Old Road, vol. iii. sec. 68.

When the softened or passionate syllables of Italian replace the Latin resoluteness, [the iambus] enters the measure of Dante, with a peculiar quietness and lightness of accent which distinguish it, there, wholly from the Greek and English Iambus.

Elements of English Prosody, Iambus, sec. v.

Dante retains his courage and rejoices in hope of Paradise, through all his exile.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xvi. sec. 34.

II

DANTE AND OTHER POETS AND PAINTERS

You will understand Homer better by seeing his reflection in Dante, as you may trace new forms and softer colours in a hill-side, redoubled by a lake. *Queen of the Air*, i. sec. 18.

Whatever difference, involving inferiority, there exists between Shakespeare and Dante, in his conceptions of the relation between this world and the next, we may partly trace (as . . . between Bacon and Pascal) to the less noble character of the scenes around him in his youth; and admit that, though it was necessary for his special work that he should be put, as it were, on a level with his race, on those plains of Stratford, we should see in this a proof, instead of a negation, of the mountain power over human intellect. For breadth and perfectness of condescending sight, the Shakespearian mind stands alone; but in *ascending* sight it is limited. The breadth of grasp is innate; the stoop and slightness of it was given by the circumstances

of scene; and the difference between those careless masques of heathen gods, or unbelieved though mightily conceived visions of fairy, witch, or risen spirit, and the earnest faith of Dante's vision of Paradise, is the true measure of the difference in influence between the willowy banks of Avon and the purple hills of Arno.

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. xx. sec. 38.

So far as nature had influence over the early training of [Shakespeare], it was essential to his perfectness that the nature should be quiet. No mountain passions were to be allowed in him. Inflict upon him but one pang of the monastic conscience; cast upon him but one cloud of the mountain gloom; and his serenity had been gone forever — his equity — his infinity. You would have made another Dante of him; and all that he would have ever uttered about poor, soiled, and frail humanity would have been the quarrel between Sinon and Adam of Brescia,[1] — speedily retired from, as not worthy a man's hearing, nay, not to be heard without heavy fault.

. . . If Shakespeare had cared to enter into

[1] *Inferno,* xxx. 98–148.

the spirit even of the early fifteenth century, he would assuredly have marked this affection in some of his knights, and indicated, even then, in heroic tempers, the peculiar respect for loveliness of *dress* which we find constantly in Dante. But he could not do this; he had not seen it in real life. In his time dress had become an affectation and absurdity.

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. xx. sec. 29, 30.

[Shakespeare] is distinguished from Dante eminently by his always dwelling on last causes instead of first causes. Dante invariably points to the moment of the soul's choice which fixed its fate, to the instant of the day when it read no farther,[1] or determined to give bad advice about Penestrino.[2] But Shakespeare always leans on the force of Fate, as it urges the final evil; and dwells with infinite bitterness on the power of the wicked, and the infinitude of result dependent seemingly on little things.

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. xx. sec. 38, note.

And this strange earthly instinct of ours, coupled as it is, in our good men, with great simplicity

[1] *Inferno*, v. 138. [2] *Id.*, xxvii. 98.

and common sense, renders them shrewd and perfect observers and delineators of actual nature, low or high; but precludes them from that speciality of art which is properly called sublime. If ever we try anything in the manner of Michael Angelo or of Dante, we catch a fall, even in literature, as Milton in the battle of the angels, spoiled from Hesiod: while in art, every attempt in this style has hitherto been the sign either of the presumptuous egotism of persons who had never really learned to be workmen, or it has been connected with very tragic forms of the contemplation of death, — it has always been partly insane, and never once wholly successful.

Lectures on Art, i. sec. 15.

The three great successive Christian Schools. (*a*) Arnolfo's and Dante's . . . Christian and Pure Gothic.

Val d'Arno, Introd.

Now, the highest representatives of men who have thus endeavoured, during the Christian era, to search out these deep things, and relate them, are Dante and Milton. There are none who

for earnestness of thought, for mastery of word, can be classed with these. I am not at present, mind you, speaking of persons set apart in any priestly or pastoral office, to deliver creeds to us, or doctrines; but of men who try to discover and set forth, as far as by human intellect is possible, the facts of the other world. Divines may perhaps teach us how to arrive there, but only these two poets have in any powerful manner striven to discover, or in any definite words professed to tell, what we shall see and become there: or how those upper and nether worlds are, and have been, inhabited.

And what have they told us? Milton's account of the most important event in his whole system of the universe, the fall of the angels, is evidently unbelievable to himself; and the more so, that it is wholly founded on, and in a great part spoiled and degraded from, Hesiod's account of the decisive war of the younger gods with the Titans. The rest of his poem is a picturesque drama, in which every artifice of invention is visibly and consciously employed; not a single fact being, for an instant, conceived as tenable by any living faith.

Dante's conception is far more intense, and,

by himself, for the time, not to be escaped from; it is indeed a vision, but a vision only, and that one of the wildest that ever entranced a soul — a dream in which every grotesque type or phantasy of heathen tradition is renewed, and adorned; and the destinies of the Christian Church, under their most sacred symbols, become literally subordinate to the praise, and are only to be understood by the aid, of one dear Florentine maiden. . . .

We have to remember that these two great teachers were both of them warped in their temper and thwarted in their search for truth. They were men of intellectual war, unable, through darkness of controversy, or stress of personal grief, to discern where their own ambition modified their utterances of the moral law; or their own agony mingled with their anger at its violation. But greater men than these have been — innocent hearted — too great for contest. Men, like Homer and Shakespeare, . . . to whose unoffended, uncondemning sight, the whole of human nature reveals itself in a pathetic weakness, with which they will not strive; or in a mournful and transitory strength, which they dare not praise. And all Pagan and Christian

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civilization thus becomes subject to them. It does not matter how little, or how much, any of us have read, either of Homer or Shakespeare: everything round us, in substance, or in thought, has been moulded by them.

Sesame and Lilies, Lect. iii. sec. 110.

"It might be too much to parallel [Niccola Pisano] in actual genius with Dante and Shakespeare; they stand alone and unapproachable, each on his distinct pinnacle of the temple of Christian song; and yet neither of them can boast such extent and durability of influence, for whatever of highest excellence has been achieved in sculpture and painting, not in Italy only, but throughout Europe, has been in obedience to the impulse he primarily gave, and in following up the principle which he first struck out."

Lord Lindsay, quoted in *Val d' Arno*, Lect. x. sec. 264.

The issue of the Reformation which these great painters, scholars of Dante [Botticelli and Perugino] began, we may follow farther in the study . . . of the lives of Cimabue and Giotto.

Ariadne Fiorentina, Lect. vi. sec. 43 (comp. 26).

The musical ear of Shakespeare or Dante is just as far finer than Coleridge's, as their sense is stricter, though they never forget their purposes in their chant.

Elements of English Prosody, Trimeter, sec. iii.

The high creative poet might even be thought, to a great extent, impassive (as shallow people think Dante stern), receiving indeed all feelings to the full, but having a great centre of reflection and knowledge in which he stands serene, and watches the feeling, as it were, from far off.

Dante, in his most intense moods, has entire command of himself, and can look around calmly, at all moments, for the image or the word that will best tell what he sees to the upper or lower world. But Keats and Tennyson, and the poets of the second order, are generally themselves subdued by the feelings under which they write, or, at least, write as choosing to be so, and therefore admit certain expressions and modes of thought which are in some sort diseased or false.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xii. sec. 10.

Turner's love of truth was as stern and patient as Dante's; . . . Turner was what Dante might have been, without the *bello ovile*,[1] without Casella,[2] without Beatrice, and without Him who gave them all, and took them all away.

Modern Painters, vol. v. IX. ch. xi. sec. 26.

But the original make and frame of Turner's mind being not vulgar, but as nearly as possible a combination of the minds of Keats and Dante, joining capricious waywardness, and intense openness to every fine pleasure of sense, and hot defiance of formal precedent, with a quite infinite tenderness, generosity, and desire of justice and truth.

Modern Painters, vol. v. IX. ch. ix. sec. 9.

With this steadiness of bitter melancholy, there is joined a sense of the material beauty, both of inanimate nature, the lower animals, and human beings, which in the iridescence, colour-depth, and morbid (I use the word deliberately) mystery and softness of it, — with other qualities indescribable by any single word, and only to be analysed by extreme care, — is found, to the full,

[1] *Paradiso*, xxv. 5. [2] *Purgatorio*, ii. 91.

only in five men that I know of in modern times; namely, Rousseau, Shelley, Byron, Turner, and myself, — differing totally and throughout the entire group of us, from the delight in clear-struck beauty of Angelico and the Trecentisti; and separated, much more singularly, from the cheerful joys of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Scott, by its unaccountable affection for 'Rokkes blak' and other forms of terror and power, such as those of the ice-oceans, which to Shakespeare were only Alpine rheum; and the Via Malas and Diabolic Bridges which Dante would have condemned none but lost souls to climb or cross; — all this love of impending mountains, coiled thunder-clouds, and dangerous sea, being joined in us with a sulky, almost ferine, love of retreat in valleys of Charmettes, gulphs of Spezia, ravines of Olympus, low lodgings in Chelsea, and close brushwood at Coniston.

On the Old Road, vol. iii. sec. 73.

III

DANTE'S INTERPRETERS

[Sandro Botticelli] was the only painter of Italy who thoroughly felt and understood Dante.

Fors Clavigera, xxii.

Returning to Florence [Botticelli] reads Dante's vision of the Hell created by its violation [i. e. of the Law of God]. He knows that the pictures he has painted in Rome cannot be understood by the people; they are exclusively for the best trained scholars in the Church. Dante, on the other hand, can only be read in manuscript; but the people could and would understand *his* lessons, if they were pictured in accessible and enduring form. He throws all his own lauded work aside, — all for which he is most honoured, and in which his now matured and magnificent skill is as easy to him as singing to a perfect musician. And he sets himself to a servile and despised labour, — his friends mocking him, his resources failing him, infinite 'disorder' getting into his affairs — of this world.

Never such another thing happened in Italy any more. Botticelli engraved her 'Pilgrim's Progress' for her, putting himself in prison to do it. She would not read it when done.

Ariadne Fiorentina, Lect. vi. sec. 194, 195.

"Sandro's 'Dante' is dated as published in 1482. . . . After Savonarola's death, Sandro must have lost heart, and gone into Dante altogether. Most ways in literature and art lead to Dante."

Quoted from Tyrwhitt, *Ariadne Fiorentina*, app. ii. 254 note.

It is true that the conciseness and the rivulet-like melody of Dante must continually be lost [in any translation]; but if I could only read English, and had to choose, for a library narrowed by poverty, between Cary's 'Dante' and our own original Milton, I should choose Cary without an instant's pause.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. ch. vii. sec. xli. note.

Flaxman's outlines to Dante contain, I think, examples of almost every kind of falsehood and feebleness which it is possible for a trained artist, not base in thought, to commit or admit, both in design and execution.

Elements of Drawing, app. ii.

I had now read enough of Cary's 'Dante,' and Sismondi's 'Italian Republics,' and Lord Lindsay, to feel what I had to look for in the Campo Santo.

Yet at this moment I pause to think what it was that I found.

Briefly the entire doctrine of Christianity, painted so that a child could understand it. And what a child cannot understand of Christianity no one need try to.

Præterita (1845), vol. ii. ch. vi.

IV

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIVINA COMMEDIA

It is a strange habit of wise humanity to speak in enigmas only, so that the highest truths and usefullest laws must be hunted for through whole picture-galleries of dreams, which to the vulgar seem dreams only. Thus Homer, the Greek tragedians, Plato, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Goethe have hidden all that is chiefly serviceable in their work, and in all the various literature they absorbed and re-embodied, under types which have rendered it quite useless to the multitude. . . . We shall perhaps now every day . . . feel ourselves more and more wonderstruck that men such as Homer and Dante (and, in an inferior sphere, Milton), not to speak of the great sculptors and painters of every age, have permitted themselves, though full of all nobleness and wisdom, to coin idle imaginations of the mysteries of eternity, and guide the faiths of the families of the earth by the courses of their own vague and visionary

arts: while the indisputable truths of human life and duty, respecting which they all have but one voice, lie hidden behind these veils of phantasy, unsought, and often unsuspected.

Munera Pulveris, ch. iii. sec. 87.

Every great composition in the world, every great piece of painting or literature — without any exception, from the birth of Man to this hour — is an assertion of moral law, as strict, when we examine it, as the 'Eumenides' or the 'Divina Commedia;' while the total collapse of all power of artistic design in Italy at this day has been signalized and sealed by the production of an epic poem in praise of the Devil, and in declaration that God is a malignant 'Larva.'

Fors Clavigera, lxxxiii.

The faith of Horace in the spirit of the fountain of Brundusium, in the Faun of his hillside, and in the help of the greater gods, is constant, vital, and practical; yet in some degree still tractable by his imagination, as also that of great poets and painters in Christian times. In Milton the tractability is singular; he hews his gods out to his own fancy, and then believes in them; but in Giotto and Dante the art is always subjected to the true vision. *Fors Clavigera*, xcii.

Now the first necessity for the doing of any great work in ideal art, is the looking upon all foulness with horror, as a contemptible though dreadful enemy. You may easily understand what I mean, by comparing the feelings with which Dante regards any form of obscenity or of base jest, with the temper in which the same things are regarded by Shakespeare.

Lectures on Art, i. sec. 15.

Have you ever noticed how the baying of Cerberus is stopped in the sixth canto of Dante, —

> Il duca mio . . .
> prese *la terra ;* e con piene le pugna
> la gittò dentro alle bramose canne.[1]

(To the three, therefore plural.)
It is one of the innumerable subtleties which mark Dante's perfect knowledge — inconceivable except as a form of inspiration — of the inner meaning of every myth, whether of classic or Christian theology, known in his day.

St. Mark's Rest, ch. ii.

The spirit of persecution, as well as of vain hope founded on creed only, is mingled in

[1] *Inferno*, vi. 25–27.

every line with the lovely moral teaching of the 'Divina Commedia.' *Verona*, i. sec. 16.

Their faith was, in some respects, like Dante's or Milton's, firm in general conception, but not able to vouch for every detail in the forms they gave it.

Queen of the Air, ch. i. sec. 16.

I threw the book aside and took up my Cary's Dante, which is always on the carriage seat, or in my pocket — not exactly for reading but as an antidote to pestilent things and thoughts in general; and store, as it were, of mental quinine, — a few lines being enough to recover me out of any shivering marsh fever fit, brought on among foulness or stupidity.

Deucalion, ch. x. sec. 8.

[Cumæ.] In the same literal way in which the snows and Alpine roses of the Lauterbrunnen were visible Paradise, here, in the valley of ashes and throat of lava, were visible Hell. If thus in the natural, how else should it be in the spiritual, world? I had never yet read a line of Dante. From the moment when I knew the words, —

It now is evening there, where buried lies
The body in which I cast a shade, removed
To Naples from Brundisium's wall,[1]

not Naples only, but Italy, became forever flushed with the sacred twilight of them.

Præterita, vol. ii. ch. iii.

[1] *Purgatorio*, iii. 25–27.

V

THE SOURCE AND INSPIRATION OF THE DIVINA COMMEDIA

You know well the plan of Dante's great poem — that it is a love-poem to his dead lady, a song of praise for her watch over his soul. Stooping only to pity, never to love, she yet saves him from destruction — saves him from hell. He is going eternally astray in despair; she comes down from heaven to his help, and throughout the ascents of Paradise is his teacher, interpreting for him the most difficult truths, divine and human; and leading him, with rebuke upon rebuke, from star to star.

I do not insist upon Dante's conception; if I began, I could not cease: besides, you might think this a wild imagination of one poet's heart.

Sesame and Lilies, Lect. ii. sec. 60.

I will not speak of the transcendental and imaginative intensity in which [Love] may reign

in noble hearts, as when it inspired the greatest religious poem yet given to men.

Time and Tide, x.

It was not till after an interval of nearly two thousand years of various error and pain, that, partly as the true reward of Christian warfare nobly sustained through centuries of trial, and partly as the visionary culmination of the faith which saw in a maiden's purity the link between God and her race, the highest and holiest strength of mortal love was reached; and, together with it, in the song of Dante, and the painting of Bernard of Luino and his fellows, the perception, and embodiment *for ever* of whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; — that, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, men might think on those things.

Lectures on Art, iv. sec. 92.

Only in days when the Cross was received with courage, the Scripture searched with honesty, and the Pastor heard in faith, can the pure word of God, and the bright sword of the Spirit, be recognized in the heart and hand of Christianity. The effect of Biblical poetry and legend on its

intellect must be traced farther, through decadent ages, and in unfenced fields ; — producing 'Paradise Lost' for us, no less than the 'Divina Commedia ;' — Goethe's 'Faust' and Byron's 'Cain,' no less than the 'Imitatio Christi.'

Our Fathers have told us, ch. iii. sec. 44.

That there *is* a Sacred classic literature, running parallel with that of the Hebrews, and coalescing in the symbolic legends of mediæval Christendom, is shown in the most tender and impressive way by the independent, yet similar, influence of Virgil upon Dante, and upon Bishop Gawaine Douglas.

Our Fathers have told us, ch. iii. sec. 53.

Maia, the eldest of the sister stars of spring. Those stars are called not only Pleiades, but Vergiliæ, from a word mingling the ideas of the turning or returning of spring-time with the outpouring of rain. The mother of Virgil bearing the name of Maia, Virgil himself received his name from the seven stars ; and he, in forming, first, the mind of Dante, and through him that of Chaucer (besides whatever special minor influence came from the Pastorals and Georgics), became the fountain-head of all the best literary

power connected with the love of vegetative nature among civilized races of men. Take the fact for what it is worth; still it is a strange seal of coincidence, in word and in reality, upon the Greek dream of the power over human life, and its purest thoughts, in the stars of spring.

Queen of the Air, i. sec. 38.

Quite the most beautiful sign of the power of true Christian-Catholic faith is this continual acknowledgement by it of the brotherhood — nay more the fatherhood, of the elder nations who had not seen Christ; but had been filled with the Spirit of God; and obeyed, according to their knowledge, His unwritten law. The pure charity and humility of this temper are seen in all Christian art, according to its strength and purity of race; but best, to the full, seen and interpreted by the three great Christian-Heathen poets, Dante, Douglas of Dunkeld, and George Chapman.

Our Fathers have told us, ch. iv. sec. 20.

Hitherto, there has been adversity between the schools of classic and Christian art, only in part conquered by the most liberal-minded of artists

and poets: Nicholas of Pisa accepts indeed the technical aid of antiquity, but with much loss to his Christian sentiment; Dante uses the imagery of Æschylus for the more terrible picturing of the Hell to which, in common with the theologians of his age, he condemned his instructor; but while Minos and the Furies are represented by him as still existent in Hades, there is no place in Paradise for Diana or Athena. Contrariwise, the later revival of the legends of antiquity meant scorn in those of Christendom.

Art of England, Lect. ii.

INFERNO

INFERNO

Strictly speaking, the imagination is never governed; it is always the ruling and Divine power: and the rest of the man is to it only as an instrument which it sounds, or a tablet on which it writes; clearly and sublimely if the wax be smooth and the strings true, grotesquely and wildly if they are stained and broken. And thus the Iliad, the Inferno, the 'Pilgrim's Progress' the 'Faërie Queene,' are all of them true dreams; only the sleep of the men to whom they came was the deep, living sleep which God sends, with a sacredness in it, as of death, the revealer of secrets.

Stones of Venice, vol. iii. sec. lx.

That Hell, which so many people think the only place Dante gives any account of (yet seldom know his account even of that), was, he tells you, divided into upper, midmost, and nether pits. You usually lose sight of this main division of it, in the more complex one of the nine circles; but remember, these are divided in

diminishing proportion: six of them are the upper hell; two, the midmost; one, the lowest.[1]

You will find this a very pretty and curious proportion. Here it is in labyrinthine form, putting the three dimensions at right angles to each other, and drawing a spiral round them. I show you it in a spiral line, because the idea of descent is in Dante's mind, spiral (as of a worm's or serpent's coil) throughout; even to the mode of Geryon's flight, '*ruota* e discende;'[2] and Minos accordingly indicates which circle any sinner is to be sent to, in a most graphically labyrinthine manner, by twisting his tail round himself so many times, necessarily thus marking the level.

[1] The deepening orders of sin, in the nine circles, are briefly these: 1. Unredeemed nature; 2. Lust; 3. Gluttony; 4. Avarice; 5. Discontent; 6. Heresy; 7. Open violence; 8. Fraudful violence; 9. Treachery. But they are curiously dove-tailed together, — serpent-tailed, I should say, — by closer coil, not expanding plume.

[2] *Inferno*, xvii. 116.

The uppermost and least dreadful hell, divided into six circles, is the hell of those who cannot rightly govern themselves, but have no mind to do mischief to any one else. In the lowest circle of this, and within the same walls with the terrible mid-hell, whose stench even comes up and reaches to them, are people who have not rightly governed their *thoughts:* and these are buried for ever in fiery tombs, and their thoughts thus governed to purpose; which you, my friends, who are so fond of freedom of thought, and freedom of the press, may wisely meditate on.

Then the two lower hells are for those who have wilfully done mischief to other people. And of these, some do open injury, and some, deceitful injury, and of these the rogues are put the lower; but there is a greater distinction in the manner of sin, than its simplicity or roguery: — namely, whether it be done in hot blood or in cold blood. The injurious sins, done in hot blood — that is to say, under the influence of passion — are in the midmost hell; but the sins done in cold blood, without passion, or, more accurately, contrary to passion, far down *below* the freezing point, are put in the lowest hell: the ninth circle. . . .

. . . In my poor and faltering path I have myself been taken far enough down among the diminished circles to see this nether hell — the hell of Traitors ; and to know, what people do not usually know of treachery, that it is not the fraud, but the *cold-heartedness*, which is chiefly dreadful in it. Therefore, this nether Hell is of ice, not fire ; and of ice that nothing can break.[1] No more wandering of the feet in labyrinth like this, and the eyes, once cruelly tearless, now blind with frozen tears. But the midmost hell, for hot-blooded sinners, has other sort of lakes, — as for instance . . . of hot pitch.[2]

Fors Clavigera, xxiii.

There is first, observe, this great distinction in [Dante's] mind between the penalties of the Hell, and the joy of Paradise. The penalty is assigned to definite act of hand ; the joy, to definite state of mind. It is questioned of no one, either in the Purgatory or the Paradise, what he has done ; but only what evil feeling is still in his heart, or what good, when purified wholly, his nature is noble enough to receive.

On the contrary, Hell is constituted such by

[1] *Inferno*, xxxii. 13–36. [2] *Id.*, xxix. 6.

the one great negative state of being without Love or Fear of God ;— there are no degrees of that State ; but there are more or less dreadful sins which can be done in it, according to the degradation of the unredeemed Human nature. And men are judged according to their works.

To give a single instance. The punishment of the fourth circle in Hell is for the *Misuse* of money, for having either sinfully kept it, or sinfully spent it.[1] But the pain in Purgatory is only for having sinfully *Loved* it :[2] and the hymn of repentance is, ' My soul cleaveth unto the dust ; quicken thou me.'

Farther, and this is very notable. You might at first think that Dante's divisions were narrow and artificial in assigning each circle to one sin only, as if every man did not variously commit many. But it is always one sin, the favourite, which destroys souls. That conquered, all others fall with it; that victorious, all others follow with it. Nevertheless, . . . the joiner's work, and interwoven walls of Dante's Inferno, marking double forms of sin, and their overlapping, as it were, when they meet, is one of the subtlest conditions traceable in his whole design.

[1] *Inferno*, vii. [2] *Purgatorio*, xix., xx.

. . . The Minotaur, spirit of lust and anger, rules over the central hell.[1] But the *sins* of lust and anger, definitely and limitedly described as such, are punished in the upper hell, in the second and fifth circles. Why is this, think you?

Have you ever noticed — enough to call it noticing seriously — the expression, 'fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of *the mind?*' There is one lust and one anger of the flesh only; these, all men must feel; rightly feel, if in temperance; wrongly, if in excess; but even then, not necessarily to the destruction of their souls. But there is another lust, and another anger, of the heart; and *these* are the Furies of Phlegethon — wholly ruinous. Lord of these, on the shattered rocks, lies couched the infamy of Crete.[2] For when the heart, as well as the flesh, desires what it should not, and the heart, as well as the flesh, consents and kindles to its wrath, the whole man is corrupted, and his heart's blood is fed in its veins from the lake of fire.

Take, for special example, this sin of usury with which we have ourselves to deal. The punishment in the fourth circle of the upper hell

[1] *Inferno*, xii. 1–27. [2] *Id.*, xii. 11, 12.

is on Avarice, not Usury.[1] For a man may be utterly avaricious, — greedy of gold — in an instinctive fleshly way, yet not corrupt his intellect. Many of the most good-natured men are misers.

Fors Clavigera, xxiv.

Milton's effort, in all that he tells us of his Inferno, is to make it indefinite ; Dante's, to make it *definite*. Both, indeed, describe it as entered through gates ; but, within the gate, all is wild and fenceless with Milton, having indeed its four rivers, — the last vestige of the mediæval tradition, — but rivers which flow through a waste of mountain and moorland, and by 'many a frozen, many a fiery Alp.' But Dante's Inferno is accurately separated into circles drawn with well-pointed compasses; mapped and properly surveyed in every direction, trenched in a thoroughly good style of engineering from depth to depth, and divided in the '*accurate* middle' (dritto mezzo) of its deepest abyss, into a concentric series of ten moats and embankments, like those about a castle, with bridges from each embankment to the next ;[2] precisely in the manner of those bridges over Hiddekel and Eu-

[1] *Inferno*, vii. [2] *Id.*, xviii. 1–18.

phrates, which Mr. Macaulay thinks so innocently designed, apparently not aware that he is also laughing at Dante. These larger fosses are of rock, and the bridges also; but as he goes further into detail, Dante tells us of various minor fosses and embankments, in which he anxiously points out to us not only the formality, but the neatness and perfectness, of the stonework. For instance, in describing the river Phlegethon, he tells us that it was 'paved with stone at the bottom, and at the sides, and *over the edges of the sides*,' just as the water is at the baths of Bulicame;[1] and for fear we should think this embankment at all *larger* than it really was, Dante adds, carefully, that it was made just like the embankments of Ghent or Bruges against the sea, or those in Lombardy which bank the Brenta, only 'not so high, nor so wide' as any of these.[2] And besides the trenches, we have two well-built castles; one like Ecbatana, with seven circuits of wall (and surrounded by a fair stream), wherein the great poets and sages of antiquity live;[3] and another, a great fortified city with walls of iron, red-hot, and a deep fosse round

[1] *Inferno*, xiv. 79–83. [2] *Id.*, xv. 1–12.
[3] *Id.*, iv. 106–108.

it, and full of 'grave citizens,' — the city of Dis.[1]

Now, whether this be in what we moderns call 'good taste' or not, I do not mean just now to inquire — Dante having nothing to do with taste, but with the facts of what he had seen; only, so far as the imaginative faculty of the two poets is concerned, note that Milton's vagueness is not the sign of imagination, but of its absence, so far as it is significative in the matter. For it does not follow, because Milton did not map out his Inferno as Dante did, that he *could* not have done so if he had chosen; only, it was the easier, and less imaginative process to leave it vague than to define it. Imagination is always the seeing and asserting faculty; that which obscures or conceals may be judgment, or feeling, but not invention. The invention, whether good or bad, is in the accurate engineering, not in the fog and uncertainty.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 29.

Dante, who will not leave even external forms obscure, degrades them before he can feel them to be demoniacal; so also John Bunyan: both

[1] *Inferno*, viii. 68–78.

of them, I think, having firmer faith than Milton's in their own creations, and deeper insight into the nature of sin. Milton makes his fiends too noble, and misses the foulness, inconstancy, and fury of wickedness. His Satan possesses some virtues, not the less virtues for being applied to evil purpose. Courage, resolution, patience, deliberation in council, this latter being eminently a wise and holy character, as opposed to the 'Insania' of excessive sin: and all this, if not a shallow and false, is a smoothed and artistical, conception. On the other hand, I have always felt that there was a peculiar grandeur in the indescribable ungovernable fury of Dante's fiends, ever shortening its own powers, and disappointing its own purposes; the deaf, blind, speechless, unspeakable rage, fierce as the lightning, but erring from its mark or turning senselessly against itself, and still further debased by foulness of form and action. Something is indeed to be allowed for the rude feelings of the time, but I believe all such men as Dante are sent into the world at the time when they can do their work best; and that, it being appointed for him to give to mankind the most vigorous realization possible both of Hell and

Heaven, he was born both in the country and at the time which furnished the most stern opposition of Horror and Beauty, and permitted it to be written in the clearest terms. And therefore, though there are passages in the 'Inferno' which it would be impossible, for any poet now to write, I look upon it as all the more perfect for them. For there can be no question but that one characteristic of excessive vice is indecency, a general baseness in its thoughts and acts concerning the body,[1] and that the full portraiture of it cannot be given without marking, and that in the strongest lines, this tendency to corporeal degradation; which, in the time of Dante, could be done frankly, but cannot now.

Stones of Venice, vol. iii. ch. iii. sec. liii.

CANTO I.

(*Line* 1.) It seems to me that there is a kind of central year about which we may consider the energy of the middle ages to be gathered; a kind of focus of time, which, by what is to

[1] Let the reader examine, with especial reference to this subject, the general character of the language of Iago.

my mind a most touching and impressive Divine appointment, has been marked for us by the greatest writer of the middle ages, in the first words he utters; namely, the year 1300, the 'mezzo del cammin' of the life of Dante. Now, therefore, to Giotto, the contemporary of Dante, and who drew Dante's still existing portrait in this very year, 1300, we may always look for the central mediæval idea in any subject.[1] *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. ch. viii. sec. lxxxvi.

(*Line* 2.) The sense of that purifying and perfecting influence in mountains which we saw the mediæval mind was so ready to suggest.[2] The same general idea is indicated at the very commencement of the poem, in which Dante is overwhelmed by fear and sorrow in passing through a dark forest, but revives on seeing the sun touch the top of a hill [lines 16, 17], afterwards called by Virgil 'the pleasant mount — the cause and source of all delight' [line 77]. *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 32.

To Dante, the idea of a forest is exceedingly repulsive, so that, as just noticed, in the opening of his poem, he cannot express a general

[1] See below, *Purgatorio*, xi. [2] See below, p. 121.

despair about life more strongly than by saying he was lost in a wood so savage and terrible, that 'even to think or speak of it is distress, — it was so bitter, — it was something next door to death' [line 6]; and one of the saddest scenes in all the Inferno is in a forest, of which the trees are haunted by lost souls;[1] while (with only one exception), whenever the country is to be beautiful, we find ourselves coming out into open air and open meadows.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 33.

(*Lines* 2–5.) See below, Purgatorio, xxviii.

CANTO II.

(*Line* 1.) [To the mediævals] the word 'brown' bore, in their colour vocabulary, a still gloomier sense than with us. I was for some time embarrassed by Dante's use of it with respect to dark skies and water. Thus, in describing a simple twilight — not a Hades twilight, but an ordinarily fair evening — (Inferno, ii. 1) he says, the 'brown' air took the animals of earth away from their fatigues; — the waves under Charon's boat are 'brown;'[2] and Lethe,

[1] xiii. 37. [2] iii. 118.

which is perfectly clear and yet dark, as with oblivion, is 'bruna bruna,' 'brown, *exceeding* brown.'[1] Now, clearly in all these cases no *warmth* is meant to be mingled in the colour. Dante had never seen one of our bog-streams, with its porter-coloured foam; and there can be no doubt that, in calling Lethe brown, he means it was dark slate grey, inclining to black; as, for instance, our clear Cumberland lakes, which, looked straight down upon where they are deep, seem to be lakes of ink. I am sure this is the colour he means; because no clear stream or lake on the Continent ever looks brown, but blue or green; and Dante, by merely taking away the pleasant colour, would get at once to this idea of grave clear grey. So, when he was talking of twilight, his eye for colour was far too good to let him call it *brown* in our sense. Twilight is not brown, but purple, golden, or dark grey; and this last was what Dante meant. Farther, I find that this negation of colour is always the means by which Dante subdues his tones.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 9.

(*Line* 142.) See below, Purgatorio, xxviii.

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxviii. 31.

CANTO III.

(*Line* 1.) Thus the fatal inscription on the Hades gate is written in 'obscure colour' [line 10], and the air which torments the passionate spirits is 'aer nero,' *black* air (Inferno, v. 51), called presently afterward (line 86) malignant air, just as the grey cliffs are called malignant cliffs.[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 9.

(*Line* 60.) Though in my own fortune, unprosperous, and in my own thoughts and labour, failing, I find more and more every day that I have helped many persons unknown to me; that others, in spite of my failures, begin to understand me, and are ready to follow; and that a certain power is indeed already in my hands, woven widely into the threads of many human lives; which power, if I now laid down, that line (which I have always kept the murmur of in my ears, for warning, since first I read it thirty years ago,) —

Che fece per viltate 'l gran rifiuto

would be finally and fatally true of me.

I fear that few modern readers of Dante under-

[1] vii. 108.

stand the dreadful meaning of this hellish outer district, or suburb, full of the refuse or worthless scum of Humanity — such numbers that 'non avrei creduto, che morte tanta n' avesse disfatta' [lines 56, 57] — who are stung to bloody torture by insects, and whose blood and tears together — the best that human souls can give — are sucked up, on the hell-ground, by worms. *Fors Clavigera*, lxi.

(*Line* 112.) When Dante describes the spirits falling from the bank of Acheron 'as dead leaves flutter from a bough,' he gives the most perfect image possible of their utter lightness, feebleness, passiveness, and scattering agony of despair, without, however, for an instant losing his own clear perception that *these* are souls, and *those* are leaves: he makes no confusion of one with the other.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xii. sec. 6.

(*Line* 118.) See above, canto ii.

CANTO IV.

(*Lines* 84, 111.) "Carpaccio makes the representative of faith central. Without faith, men

indeed may shun the deepest abyss, yet cannot attain the glory of heavenly hope and love. Dante saw how such men — even the best — may not know the joy that is perfect. Moving in the divided splendour merely of under earth, on sward whose fresh verdure, eternally changeless, expects neither in patient waiting nor in sacred hope the early and the latter rain, 'Sembianza avevan nè trista nè lieta.' "

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. ii.

(*Line* 118.) Whatever virtue the pagan possessed was rooted in pride, and fruited with sorrow. It began in the elevation of his own nature; it ended but in the 'verde smalto' — the hopeless green — of the Elysian fields. . . . Dante could not have thought of the flowering of the grass but as associated with happiness.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 53.

The first instance I know of right use [of enamel], though very probably it had been so employed before, is in Dante. The righteous spirits of the pre-Christian ages are seen by him, though in the Inferno, yet in a place open, luminous, and high, walking upon the 'green enamel.'

I am very sure that Dante did not use this phrase as we use it. He knew well what enamel was; and his readers, in order to understand him thoroughly, must remember what it is,—a vitreous paste, dissolved in water, mixed with metallic oxides, to give it the opacity and the colour required, spread in a moist state on metal, and afterwards hardened by fire, so as never to change. And Dante means, in using this metaphor of the grass of the Inferno, to mark that it is laid as a tempering and cooling substance over the dark, metallic, gloomy ground; but yet so hardened by the fire, that it is not any more fresh or living grass, but a smooth, silent, lifeless bed of eternal green.[1]

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 48.

Dante thinks the righteous spirits of the heathen enough comforted in Hades by having even the *image* of green grass put beneath their feet.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 51.

(*Lines* 106–108.) See above, page 46.

[1] Compare ix. 52.

CANTO V.

(*Lines* 4–12.) Observe, then: the reward of good is essentially Life, and the wage of Sin is Death.

Now the Rewarding Judge is Rhadamanthus, 'Bright Rhadamanthus'—Xanthos, the golden haired, lord of the Elysian fields. And the punishing or tormenting Judge—the worm that dies not, and fire that is not quenched—is Minos; merciless, and in his nature brutal and rabid. Never forget the lines of Horace—

> Jam galeam Pallas et ægida
> Currusque *et rabiem paret.*

Inevitable! The serpents of the Ægis gathered into one immortal serpent, whose coils are close according to the sin it punishes.

Now hear what Dante says of Minos, and you will understand at once more of the Greek and Italian mind than you can usually learn on a summer's day. At the gate of Hell, 'Stavvi Minos orribilmente, e ringhia.' Frowned horribly—frowned as a beast frowns— . . . 'quando l'anima mal nata li vien dinanzi, tutta si confessa.' Observe this statement by Dante of the

strange power that the penalty of crime has, in making it visible to the culprit. Until the pain comes, the ill-born spirits cannot perceive the sin, but as soon as they suffer for it, they do not merely confess it to others — they feel it to be sin themselves, as they never did before. On the contrary, a well-born or noble person is made to feel his sin by the pardon of it, as the base, by punishment; and each of them gets from heaven and man what will make him feel it in his own way. I go on: —

> E quel conoscitor delle peccata
> vede qual luogo d'inferno è da essa:
> cignesi con la coda tante volte
> quantunque gradi vuol che giú sia messa.

Now just observe how much Dante, like the other strong men, expects you to find out for yourself. He never tells you even what shape Minos is; but you find with a start at the end of the passage that he is a serpent; and then, if you understand the true nature of sin and its punishment, you can enter into the myth. Observe once more, Minos' warning: 'Take care that the breadth of the way does not deceive thee.' You think that you may escape punishment

because so many sin with you — that it cannot be a sin that many commit.

Verona, ch. iii. sec. 9.

(*Lines* 11, 12.) Minos is essentially the recognizer of evil deeds 'conoscitor delle peccata,' whom, therefore, you find in Dante under the form of the ἑρπετόν.

> Cignesi con la coda tante volte
> quantunque gradi vuol che giú sia messa.
>
> *Aratra Pentelici*, Lect. vi. sec. 207.

(*Lines* 130, 131.) Without colour perfect expression never can [be got]; for the colour of a face is a part of its expression. How often has that scene between Francesca di Rimini and her lover been vainly attempted by sculptors, simply because they did not observe that the main note of expression in it was in the fair sheet-lightning — fading and flaming through the cloud of passion!

> Per piú fiate gli occhi ci sospinse
> quella lettura, *e scolorocci il viso*.
>
> *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. iii. sec. 24, note.

(*Lines* 51, 86.) See above, canto iii.

(*Line* 138.) See above, page 6.

CANTO VI.

(*Lines* 7–11.) Endeavour to enter into [Dante's] equally intense detestation of all mist, rack of cloud, or dimness of rain; and then consider with what kind of temper he would have regarded a landscape of Copley Fielding's, or passed a day in the Highlands. He has, in fact, assigned to the souls of the gluttons no other punishment in the Inferno than perpetuity of Highland weather: —

> Showers
> Ceaseless, accursed, heavy and cold, unchanged
> For ever, both in kind and in degree, —
> Large hail, discoloured water, sleety flaw,
> Through the dim midnight air streamed down amain.
>
> *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 20.

(*Lines* 25–27.) See above, page 28.

(*Line* 115.) See below, canto xvii.

CANTO VII.

(*Line* 1.) At the end of [the Valley of Diamonds, beyond the serpent forests and cliffs of dead gold] they see the King of the valley, sitting on his throne: and beside him (but it is

only a false vision) spectra of creatures like themselves, set on thrones, from which they seem to look down on all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And on the canopy of his throne there is an inscription in fiery letters, which they strive to read, but cannot; for it is written in words which are like the words of all languages, and yet are of none. Men say it is more like their own tongue to the English than it is to any other nation; but the only record of it is by an Italian, who heard the King himself cry it as a war cry, 'Pape Satan, pape Satan Aleppe.' *Ethics of the Dust*, Lect. i.

(*Lines* 1–15.)[1] The Plutus of Dante, who (to show the influence of riches in destroying the reason) is the only one of the powers of the Inferno who cannot speak intelligibly; and also the cowardliest; he is not merely quelled or restrained, but literally 'collapses' at a word; the sudden and helpless operation of mercantile panic being all told in the brief metaphor, 'as the sails, swollen with the wind, fall when the mast breaks.'

Unto This Last, Essay iv.

[1] See above, pp. 43, 45.

(*Lines* 13–15.) [Credit-power; — the conditions of its stability.] These are nearly all briefly represented by the image used for the force of money by Dante, of mast and sail.

The image may be followed out, like all of Dante's, into as close detail as the reader chooses. Thus the stress of the sail must be proportioned to the strength of the mast, and it is only in unforeseen danger that a skilful seaman ever carries all the canvas his spars will bear; states of mercantile languor are like the flap of the sail in a calm; of mercantile precaution, like taking in reefs; and mercantile ruin is instant on the breaking of the mast.

Munera Pulveris, ch. ii. sec. 58, note.

(*Lines* 21–66.) The rewards of a worthy use of riches, subordinate to other ends, are shown by Dante in the fifth and sixth orbs of Paradise;[1] for the punishment of their unworthy use, three places are assigned; one for the avaricious and prodigal whose souls are lost (Hell, canto vii.); one for the avaricious and prodigal whose souls are capable of purification (Purgatory, canto xix.); and one for the usurers, of

[1] *Paradiso*, xiv.–xx.

whom none can be redeemed (Hell, canto xvii.). The first group, the largest in all hell ('gente piú che altrove troppa,' compare Virgil's 'quæ maxima turba'), meet in contrary currents, *as the waves of Charybdis*, casting weights at each other from opposite sides. This weariness of contention is the chief element of their torture; so marked by the beautiful lines beginning, 'Or puoi, figliuol,' etc. (but the usurers, who made their money inactively, *sit* on the sand, equally without rest, however.[1] 'Di qua, di là, soccorríen,' etc.) For it is not avarice, but *contention* for riches, leading to this double misuse of them, which, in Dante's light, is the unredeemable sin. The place of its punishment is guarded by Plutus, 'the great enemy,' and 'la fièra crudele,' a spirit quite different from the Greek Plutus, who, though old and blind, is not cruel, and is curable, so as to become far-sighted. (*οὐ τυφλὸς ἀλλ' ὀξὺ βλέπων.* — Plato's epithets in first book of the Laws.) Still more does this Dantesque type differ from the resplendent Plutus of Goethe in the second part of 'Faust,' who is the personified power of wealth for good or evil — not the passion for wealth; and again

[1] xvii. 45–47.

from the Plutus of Spenser, who is the passion of mere aggregation. Dante's Plutus is specially and definitely the Spirit of Contention and Competition, or Evil Commerce's, because, as I showed before, this kind of commerce 'makes all men strangers;' his speech is therefore unintelligible, and no single soul of all those ruined by him *has recognizable features*.[1]

Munera Pulveris, ch. iii. sec. 88.

(*Lines* 53, 64–66.) Ouvrier and petroleuse; they are gone their way — to their death. But for these, the Virgin of France shall yet unfold the oriflamme above their graves, and lay her blanched lilies on their smirched dust. Yes, and for these, great Charles shall rouse his Roland, and bid him put ghostly trump to lip, and breathe a point of war; and the helmed Pucelle shall answer with a wood-note of Domrémy; — yes, and for these the Louis they mocked, like his Master, shall raise his holy hands, and pray God's peace.

'Not as the world giveth.' Everlasting shame only, and unrest, are the world's gifts.

[1] Compare *Purgatorio*, xix.

These Swine of the five per cent. shall share them duly.

> La sconoscente vita, che i fe' sozzi,
> ad ogni conoscenza or li fa bruni.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Ché tutto l'oro, ch'è sotto la luna,
> o che già fu, di queste anime stanche
> non poterebbe farne posar una.

'Ad ogni conoscenza bruni:' Dark to all recognition! So they would have it indeed, true of instinct.

Fors Clavigera, viii.

(*Lines* 56, 57.) "The worm's brethren, the Dragon's elect, wear such shameful tonsure, unencircled by the symbolic crown; prodigal of life, 'risurgeranno,' from no quiet grave, but from this haunt of horror, 'co' crin mozzi'—in piteous witness of wealth ruinously cast away."

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. ii.

(*Line* 58.) Farther, though I hold that the two crowning and most accursed sins of the society of this present day are the carelessness with which it regards the betrayal of women, and brutality with which it suffers the neglect of children, both these head and chief crimes, and all

others, are rooted first in abuse of the laws, and neglect of the duties, concerning wealth. And thus the love of money, with the parallel (and observe, *mathematically commensurate* looseness in management of it), the 'mal tener,' followed necessarily by the 'mal dare,' is, indeed, the root of all evil.

Time and Tide, XXV.

(*Lines* 121–124.) There is perhaps nothing more notable . . . than the profound truth couched under the attachment of so terrible a penalty to sadness or sorrow. It is true that Idleness does not elsewhere appear in the scheme, and is evidently intended to be included in the guilt of sadness by the word 'accidioso;' but the main meaning of the poet is to mark the duty of rejoicing in God, according both to St. Paul's command, and Isaiah's promise, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness.'[1] I do not know words that might with more benefit be borne with us, and set in our hearts momentarily against the minor regrets and rebelliousnesses of life, than these simple ones:—

[1] Is. lxiv. 5.

Tristi fummo
nel aer dolce, che dal sol s'allegra,
or ci attristiam, nella belletta negra.

We once were sad,
In the sweet air, made gladsome by the sun,
Now in these murky settlings are we sad.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. ch. viii. sec. lix.

(*Line* 108.) See above, canto iii. and below, canto xviii.

CANTO VIII.

(*Line* 12.) The vapour over the pool of Anger in the Inferno,[1] the clogging stench which rises from Caina,[2] and the fog of the circle of Anger in the Purgatorio[3] resemble, indeed, the cloud of the Plague-wind very closely,—but are conceived only as supernatural.

The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century, Lect. ii. sec. 1.

(*Lines* 67–78.) The pit of Dante's central hell is reserved for those who have actually committed *malicious* crime, involving mercilessness

[1] x. 136. [2] xi. 4–6, 10–12.
[3] *Purgatorio*, xvi. 5.

to their neighbour, or, in suicide, to themselves. But it is necessary to serpent-tail this pit with the upper hell by a district for insanity without deed; the Fury which has brought horror to the eyes, and hardness to the heart, and yet, having possessed itself of noble persons, issues in no malicious crime. Therefore the sixth circle of the upper hell is walled in, together with the central pit, as one grievous city of the dead; and at the gates of it the warders are fiends [lines 82, 83] and the watchers Furies [ix. 38]. *Watchers*, observe, as sleepless. Once in their companionship,

> Nor poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou ow'dst yesterday.

Sleepless and merciless; and yet in the Greek vision of them which Æschylus wrote, they are first seen asleep; and they remain in the city of Theseus, in mercy. *Fors Clavigera*, xxiv.

(*Lines* 73–78.) If one could ruin the towers of the Death-watch[1] of evil pride and evil

[1] The name of a tower in Florence destroyed by Niccola. — Ed.

treasure in men's hearts, there would be need enough for such work both in Florence and London. But the walls of those spiritual towers have still stronger 'grip' in them, and are fire-proof with a vengeance.

> Le mura mi parean che ferro fosse.
> . . . Ed ei mi disse : 'Il fuoco eterno,
> ch' entro l' affoca, le dimostra rosse.'

But the towers in Florence, shattered to fragments by this ingenious engineer, and the tombs in Perugia, which his son will carve, only that they also may be so well destroyed that only a few relics remain, scattered up and down the church, — are these, also, only the iron towers, and the red-hot tombs, of the city of Dis?

Val d' Arno, Lect. ii. sec. 46.

(*Lines* 68–78.) See above, page 47.

CANTO IX.

Elsewhere, furies that make the eyes evil and the heart hard. Seeing Dante from their watch tower, they call for Medusa [line 52]. 'So will we make flint of him' ('enamel,' rather — which has been put in the furnace first, then

hardened); but Virgil puts his hands over his eyes [line 60].

Thus the upper hell is knitted to the central.

Fors Clavigera, xxiv.

(*Line* 52.) Enamel.[1] We know how *hard* Dante's idea of it was; because in what is perhaps the most awful passage of the whole Inferno, when the three furies rise at the top of the burning tower, and catching sight of Dante, and not being able to get at him, shriek wildly for the Gorgon to come up too, that they may turn him into stone, — the word *stone* is not hard enough for them. Stone might crumble away after it was made, or something with life might grow upon it; no, it shall not be stone; they will make enamel of him; nothing can grow out of that, it is dead forever.

Venga Medusa, sí lo farem di *Smalto*.

Compare the parallel passage, making Dante hard or changeless in good, Purgatorio, viii. 114.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 48.

(*Line* 38.) See above, canto viii.

[1] Compare page 55.

CANTO X.

(*Lines* 88–93.) See below, canto xix.

(*Line* 136.) See above, canto viii.

CANTO XI.

(*Lines* 1, 2.) We find, then, that [Dante's] general type of rock colour was meant, whether pale or dark, to be a colourless grey — the most melancholy hue which he supposed to exist in Nature (hence the synonym for it, subsisting even till late times, in mediæval appellatives of dress, 'sad-colored') — with some rusty stain from iron; or perhaps the 'color ferrigno' of the Inferno[1] does not involve even so much of orange, but ought to be translated 'iron grey.'

This being his idea of the colour of rocks, we have next to observe his conception of their substance. And I believe it will be found that the character on which he fixes first in them is *frangibility* — breakableness to bits, as opposed to wood, which can be sawn or rent, but not shattered with a hammer, and to metal, which is tough and malleable.

[1] xviii. 2.

Thus, at the top of the abyss of the seventh circle, appointed for the 'violent,' or souls who had done evil by force, we are told, first, that the edge of it was composed of 'great broken stones in a circle.'

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 13.

(*Lines* 25–28.) Sins of violence usually have passion to excuse them: they may be the madness of moments; or they may be apparently the only means of extrication from calamity. In other cases they are the diseased habits of lower and brutified natures. But theft involving deliberative intellect, and absence of passion, is the purest type of wilful iniquity, in persons capable of doing right. Which being so, it seems to be fast becoming the practice of modern society to crucify its Christ indeed, as willingly as ever, in the persons of His poor; but by no means now to crucify its thieves beside Him! It elevates its thieves after another fashion; sets them upon an hill, that their light may shine before men, and that all may see their good works, and glorify their Father, in —— the Opposite of Heaven.

Time and Tide, xv.

(*Line* 50.) All the great thinkers, therefore, have held [usury] to be unnatural and impious in so far as it feeds on the distress of others, or their folly. Hence Dante's companionship of Cahors supported by the view taken of the matter throughout the middle ages, in common with the Greeks. *Munera Pulveris*, ch. iv. sec. 98.

(*Lines* 4–6.) See above, canto viii.

CANTO XII.

(*Lines* 1–11.) To Dante, mountains are inconceivable except as great broken stones or crags, all their broad contours and undulations seem to have escaped his eye. It is, indeed, with his usual undertone of symbolic meaning that he describes the great broken stones, and the fall of the shattered mountain, as the entrance to the circle appointed for the punishment of the violent; meaning that the violent and cruel, notwithstanding all their iron hardness of heart, have no true strength, but, either by earthquake, or want of support, fall at last into desolate ruin, naked, loose, and shaking under the tread [line 30].

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 17.

(*Line* 2.) [We are told,] then, that the place was 'Alpine': and becoming hereupon attentive, in order to hear what an Alpine place is like, we find that it was 'like the place beyond Trent, where the rock, either by earthquake, or failure of support, has broken down to the plain, so that it gives any one at the top some means of getting down to the bottom' [line 9]. This is not a very elevated or enthusiastic description of an Alpine scene; and it is far from mended by the following verses, in which we are told that Dante 'began to go down by this great *unloading* of stones' [line 28], and that they moved often under his feet by reason of the new weight. The fact is that Dante, by many expressions throughout the poem, shows himself to have been a notably bad climber; and being fond of sitting in the sun, looking at his fair Baptistery, or walking in a dignified manner on flat pavement in a long robe, it puts him seriously out of his way when he has to take to his hands and knees, or look to his feet; so that the first strong impression made upon him by any Alpine scene whatever, is, clearly, that it is bad walking. When he is in a fright and hurry, and has a very steep place to

go down, Virgil has to carry him altogether, and is obliged to encourage him, again and again, when they have a steep slope to go up.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 13.

(*Lines* 4–10.) Another character of these two drawings, which gives them especial interest as connected with our inquiries into mediæval landscape is, that they are precisely and accurately illustrative of the two principal ideas of Dante about the Alps. . . . The Goldau . . . might have been drawn in purposeful illustration of the lines before referred to[1] as descriptive of a 'loco *Alpestro*.' [Lines 4–10 here quoted, also Cayley's translation.]

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. xviii. sec. 25.

(*Lines* 25, 26.) The divisions of the central fire are under three creatures, all of them partly man, partly animal. The Minotaur has a man's body, a bull's head (which is precisely the general type of the English nation to-day). The Centaur Chiron has a horse's body; a man's head and breast. The Spirit of Fraud, Geryon, has a serpent's body, his face is that of a just

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 13.

man, and his breast chequered like a lizard's, with labyrinthine lines.[1]

All these three creatures signify the mingling of a brutal instinct with the human mind; but, in the Minotaur, the brute rules, the humanity is subordinate; in the Centaur, the man rules, and the brute is subordinate; in the third the man and the animal are in harmony; and both false.

Of the Centaurs, Chiron and Nessus [lines 65, 66], one, the type of human gentleness, justice, and wisdom, stooping to join itself with the nature of animals, and to be healed with the herbs of the ground, — the other, the destruction of Hercules.

Fors Clavigera, XXIV.

(*Line* 78.) Dante's centaur, Chiron, dividing his beard with his arrow before he can speak, is a thing no mortal would ever have thought of, if he had not actually seen the centaur do it. They might have composed handsomer bodies of men and horses in all possible ways through a whole life of pseudo-idealism, and yet never dreamed of any such thing. But the real

[1] XVII. 10–18.

living centaur actually trotted across Dante's brain, and he saw him do it.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. vii. sec. 6.

(*Lines* 1–27 and 11, 12.) See above, page 44.

CANTO XIII.

(*Line* 37.) See above, canto i.

CANTO XIV.

(*Lines* 28–30.) Although the Carrara mountains are named as having command of the stars and the sea,[1] the *Alps*[2] are never specially mentioned but in bad weather, or snow. On the sand of the circle of the blasphemers —

> Fell slowly wafting down
> Dilated flakes of fire, as flakes of snow
> On Alpine summit, when the wind is hushed.
>
> *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 18.

(*Lines* 79–83.) See above, page 46.

(*Line* 116.) See below, canto xxxi.

[1] xx. 50. [2] *Purgatorio*, xvii. 1.

CANTO XV.

(*Lines* 3–8.) Come with me, on an autumnal morning, through the dark gates of Padua, and let us take the broad road leading towards the East.

It lies level for a league or two, between its elms, and vine festoons full laden, their thin leaves veined into scarlet hectic, and their clusters deepened into gloomy blue; then mounts an embankment above the Brenta, and runs between the river and the broad plain, which stretches to the north in endless lines of mulberry and maize. The Brenta flows slowly, but strongly; a muddy volume of yellowish-grey water, that neither hastens nor slackens, but glides heavily between its monotonous banks, with here and there a short, babbling eddy twisted for an instant into its opaque surface, and vanishing as if something had been dragged into it and gone down. Dusty and shadeless, the road fares along the dyke on its northern side; and the tall white tower of Dolo is seen trembling in the heat mist far away, and never seems nearer than it did at first.

Stones of Venice, vol. i. ch. xxx. sec. vii.

(*Lines* 61–64.) Whenever hills are spoken of as having any influence on character, the repugnance to them is still manifest; they are always causes of rudeness or cruelty: —

> But that ungrateful and malignant race,
> Who in old times came down from Fesole,
> *Ay, and still smack of their rough mountain flint,*
> Will, for thy good deeds, show thee enmity.
> Take heed thou cleanse thee of their ways.

So again —

> As one *mountain-bred*
> Rugged and clownish, if some city's walls
> He chance to enter, round him stares agape.[1]
>
> *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 17.

[See above, canto xii.]

(*Lines* 1–12.) See above, page 46.

CANTO XVI.

(*Line* 99.) See below, canto xviii.

(*Lines* 106–136.) See next canto.

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxvi. 68.

CANTO XVII.

(*Lines* 1–105.) Let us look who it is whom Dante makes the typical Spirit of Treachery. The eighth or lowest pit of hell is given to its keeping;[1] at the edge of which pit Virgil casts a *rope* down for a signal; instantly, there rises, as from the sea, 'as one returns who hath been down to loose some anchor,'[2] 'the fell monster with the deadly sting, who passes mountains, breaks through fenced walls, and firm embattled spears; and with his filth taints all the world.'

Think for an instant of another place: 'Sharp stones are under him, he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.' We must yet keep to Dante, however. Echidna, remember, is half-maiden, half-serpent; — hear what Dante's Fraud is like: —

> Forthwith that image vile of Fraud appear'd,
> His head and upper part exposed on land,
> But laid not on the shore his bestial train.
> His face the semblance of a just man's wore,
> So kind and gracious was its outward cheer;
> The rest was serpent all: two shaggy claws
> Reached to the armpits; and the back and breast,

[1] xi. 52. [2] xvi. 134.

And either side, were painted o'er with nodes
And orbits. Colours variegated more
Nor Turks nor Tartars e'er on cloth of state
With interchangeable embroidery wove,
Nor spread Arachne o'er her curious loom.
As oft-times a light skiff moor'd to the shore
Stands part in water, part upon the land,
Or, as where dwells the greedy German boor,
The beaver settles, watching for his prey;
So on the rim, that fenced the sand with rock,
Sat perch'd the fiend of evil. In the void
Glancing, his tail upturn'd, its venomous fork
With sting like scorpion's arm'd.

You observe throughout this description the leaning on the character of the *Sea* Dragon; a little farther on, his way of flying is told us: —

As a small vessel, backing out from land
Her station quits; so thence the monster loos'd
And, when he felt himself at large, turn'd round
There, where the breast had been, his forked tail.
Thus, like an eel, outstretch'd at length he steer'd,
Gathering the air up with retractile claws.

And lastly, his name is told us: Geryon. Whereupon, looking back at Hesiod, we find that Geryon is Echidna's brother. Man-serpent, therefore, in Dante as Echidna is woman-serpent.

We next find that Geryon lived in the island

of Erytheia (blushing), only another kind of blushing than that of the Hesperid Erytheia. But it is on, also, a western island, and Geryon kept red oxen on it (said to be near the red setting sun); and Hercules kills him, as he does the Hesperian dragon; but, in order to be able to reach him, a golden boat is given to Hercules by the Sun, to cross the sea in. . . .

The Hesperian dragon is, in fine, the 'Pluto il gran nemico' of Dante;[1] the demon of all evil passions connected with covetousness; that is to say essentially of fraud, rage, and gloom.

Modern Painters, vol. v. IX. ch. x. sec. 13–15.

Geryon is the evil spirit of wealth, as arising from commerce; hence, placed as a guardian of isles in the most distant sea, and reached in a golden boat.

Modern Painters, vol. v. IX. ch. x. sec. 19.

(*Lines* 16, 17.) [Carpaccio's Sultan] — "variegated like Geryon, to the innermost mind of him — to the lightest gleam of his pencil: 'con piú color, sommesse e sopraposte; non fêr mai drappi Tartari né Turchi;' and all for good."

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. i.

[1] vi. 115.

(*Line* 45.) To receive either a 'remuneration,' or a 'portion,' or a 'share,' for the loan of anything, without personally working, was held by Dante and other such simple persons in the middle ages to be one of the worst sins that could be committed *against* nature: and the receivers of such interest were put in the same circle of Hell with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.[1]

Fors Clavigera, xi.

(*Line* 64.) [Enrico Scrovegno, a noble Paduan, built in 1303 a fortified palace and a chapel dedicated to the Annunciate Virgin,] and Giotto appears to have been summoned to decorate the chapel, he being at that time (1306) the acknowledged master of painting in Italy. . . . For the power of making this purchase, Scrovegno was in all probability indebted to his father, Reginald, who, for his avarice, is placed by Dante in the seventh circle of the Inferno, and regarded apparently as the chief of the usurers there, since he is the only one who addresses Dante.

Noting the visages of some who lay
Beneath the pelting of that dolorous fire,

[1] See above, canto xi.

One of them all I knew not: but perceived
That pendent from his neck each bore a pouch,
With colours and with emblems various marked,
On which it seemed as if their eye did feed.
And when amongst them looking round I came,
A yellow purse I saw, with azure wrought,
That wore a lion's countenance and port.
Then, still my sight pursuing its career,
Another I beheld, than blood more red,
A goose display of whiter wing than curd.
And one who bore a fat and azure swine
Pictured on his white scrip, addressed me thus:
What dost thou in this deep? Go now and know,
Since yet thou livest, that my neighbour here,
Vitaliano, on my left shall sit.
A Paduan with these Florentines am I.
Ofttimes they thunder in my ears, exclaiming,
Oh! haste that noble knight, he who the pouch
With the three goats will bring. This said, he writhed
The mouth, and lolled the tongue out, like an ox
That licks his nostrils.

This passage of Cary's 'Dante' is not quite so clear as that translator's work usually is. 'One of them all I knew not' is an awkward periphrasis for 'I knew none of them.' Dante's indignant expression of the effect of avarice in withering away distinctions of character, and the prophecy of Scrovegno, that his neighbour Vita-

liano, then living, should soon be with him, to sit on his left hand, is rendered a little obscure by the transposition of the word 'here.' Cary has also been afraid of the excessive homeliness of Dante's imagery; 'whiter than curd' being in the original 'whiter than butter.' The attachment of the purse to the neck, as a badge of shame, in the Inferno, is found before Dante's time; as, for instance, in the windows of Bourges cathedral (see Plate III. of MM. Martin and Cahier's beautiful work). And the building of the Arena Chapel by the son, as a kind of atonement for the avarice of the father, is very characteristic of the period, in which the use of money for the building of churches was considered just as meritorious as its unjust accumulation was criminal. I have seen, in a MS. Church-service of the thirteenth century, an illumination representing Church-consecration, illustrating the words, 'Fundata est domus domini supra verticem montium,' surrounded for the purpose of contrast, by a grotesque, consisting of a picture of a miser's death-bed, a demon drawing his soul out of his mouth, while his attendants are searching in his chests for his treasures. *Giotto and his Works.*

In the middle ages, wealth seems to have been looked upon by the best of men not only as contemptible, but as criminal. The purse around the neck [line 55] is, then, one of the principal signs of condemnation in the pictured inferno; and the Spirit of Poverty[1] is reverenced with subjection of heart, and faithfulness of affection, like that of a loyal knight for his lady, or a loyal subject for his queen.

A Joy Forever, Lect. i. (1st paragraph).

(*Line* 105.) Geryon, the type of avaricious fraud, as he flies, gathers the *air* up with retractile claws. *Unto this Last*, Essay iv.

(*Line* 134.) [As regards rocks] Dante's thoughts are clearly fixed altogether on the question of mere accessibility or inaccessibility. He does not show the smallest interest in the rocks, except as things to be conquered; and his description of their appearance is utterly meagre, involving no other epithets than 'erto' (steep or upright), Inferno, xix. 131; Purgatorio, iii. 47, etc.; 'sconcio' (monstrous), Inferno, xix. 131; 'stagliata' (cut), Inferno, xvii.

[1] *Paradiso*, xi. 58.

134; 'maligno' (malignant), Inferno, vii. 108; 'duro' (hard), xx. 25; with 'large' and 'broken' (rotto) in various places. No idea of roundness, massiveness, or pleasant form of any kind appears for a moment to enter his mind; and the different names which are given to the rocks in various places seem merely to refer to variations in size: thus a 'rocco' is part of a 'scoglio,' Inferno, xx. 25 and xxvi. 17; a 'scheggio' (xxi. 60, 89 and xxvi. 17) is a less fragment yet; a 'petrone' or 'sasso' is a large stone or boulder (Purgatorio, iv. 101, 104), and 'pietra' a less stone, — both of these last terms, especially 'sasso,' being used for any large mountainous mass, as in Paradiso, xi. 106; and the vagueness of the word 'monte' itself, like that of the French 'montagne,' applicable either to a hill on a post-road requiring the drag to be put on, — or to the Mont Blanc, marks a peculiar carelessness in both nations, at the time of the formation of their languages, as to the sublimity of the higher hills; so that the effect produced on an English ear by the word 'mountain,' signifying always a mass of a certain large size, cannot be conveyed either in French or Italian.

In all these modes of regarding rocks we find

(rocks being in themselves . . . by no means monstrous or frightful things) exactly that inaccuracy in the mediæval mind which we had been led to expect, in its bearing on things contrary to the spirit of that symmetrical and perfect humanity which had formed its ideal; and it is very curious to observe how closely in the terms he uses, and the feelings they indicate, Dante here agrees with Homer. For the word 'stagliata' (cut) corresponds very nearly to a favourite term of Homer's respecting rocks 'sculptured,' used by him also of ships' sides; and the frescoes and illuminations of the middle ages enable us to ascertain exactly what this idea of 'cut' rock was. [Homer and Dante] had observed the concave smoothness of certain rock fractures as eminently distinctive of rock from earth, and use the term 'cut' or 'sculptured' to distinguish the smooth surface from the knotty or sandy one, having observed nothing more respecting its real contours than is represented in [rock-drawings of Ghirlandajo and Filippo Pesellino] which look as if they had been hewn out with an adze. Lorenzo Ghiberti preserves the same type, even in his finest work.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 14–16.

These upper precipices . . . illustrate the favourite expression of Homer and Dante — *cut* rocks. However little satisfied we had reason to be with the degree of affection shown towards mountain scenery by either poet, we may now perceive, with some respect and surprise, that they had got at one character which was in the essence of the noblest rocks, just as the early illuminators got at the principles which lie at the heart of vegetation. As distinguished from all other natural forms, — from fibres which are torn, crystals which are broken, stones which are rounded or worn, animal and vegetable forms which are grown or moulded, — the true hard rock or precipice is notably a thing *cut*, its inner *grain* or structure seeming to have less to do with its form than is seen in any other object or substance whatsoever; and the aspect of subjection to some external sculpturing instrument being distinct in almost exact proportion to the size and stability of the mass.

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. xvi. sec. 19.

(*Lines* 10–18.) See above, canto xii.

(*Lines* 45–47.) See above, canto vii.

(*Lines* 103–105.) See below, canto xxxi.

(*Line* 116.) See above, page 40.

(*Lines* 118, 119.) See below, canto xxxi.

CANTO XVIII.

(*Lines* 1–16.) Although the Inferno is just as accurately measured and divided as the Purgatory [see below, Introduction to Purgatorio], it is nevertheless cleft into rocky chasms which possess something of true mountain nature — nature which we moderns of the north should most of us seek with delight, but which to the great Florentine appeared adapted only for the punishment of lost spirits, and which, on the mind of nearly all his countrymen, would to this day produce a very closely corresponding effect; so that their graceful language, dying away on the north side of the Alps, gives its departing accents to proclaim its detestation of hardness and ruggedness; and is heard for the last time, as it bestows on the noblest defiles in all the Grisons, if not in all the Alpine chain, the name of the '*evil* way' — 'la Via Mala.'

This 'evil way,' though much deeper and more sublime, corresponds closely in general character to Dante's 'Evil-pits,' just as the banks of Richmond do to his mountain of Purgatory; and it is notable that Turner has been led to illustrate, with his whole strength, the character of both; having founded, as it seems to me, his early dreams of mountain form altogether on the sweet banks of the Yorkshire streams, and rooted his hardier thoughts of it in the rugged clefts of the Via Mala.

. . . A correspondent defile [to the Via Mala] on the St. Gothard, — so terrible in one part of it, that it can, indeed, suggest no ideas but those of horror to minds either of northern or southern temper, and whose wild bridge, cast from rock to rock over a chasm as utterly hopeless and escapeless as any into which Dante gazed from the arches of Malebolge, has been, therefore, ascribed both by northern and southern lips to the master-building of the great spirit of evil — supplied to Turner the element of his most terrible thoughts in mountain vision, even to the close of his life . . . and a rocky bank and arch, in the last mountain drawing which he ever executed with his perfect power, are

remembrances of the path by which he had traversed in his youth this Malebolge of the St. Gothard.

It is therefore with peculiar interest that we must examine Dante's conception of the rocks of the eighth circle. And first, as to general tone of colour: from what we have seen of the love of the mediæval for bright and variegated colour, we might guess that his chief cause of dislike to rocks would be, in Italy, their comparative colourlessness. With hardly an exception, the range of the Apennines is composed of a stone . . . of which one peculiarity is its monotony of hue. Our slates and granites are often of very lovely colours; but the Apennine limestone is so grey and toneless, that I know not any mountain district so utterly melancholy as those which are composed of this rock, when unwooded. Now, so far as I can discover from the internal evidence in his poem, nearly all Dante's mountain wanderings had been upon this ground. He had journeyed once or twice among the Alps, indeed, but seems to have been impressed chiefly by the road from Garda to Trent, and that along the Corniche, both of which are either

upon those limestones, or a dark serpentine, which shows hardly any colour till it is polished. It is not ascertainable that he had ever seen rocky scenery of the finely coloured kind, aided by the Alpine mosses: I do not know the fall at Forli (Inferno, xvi. 99), but every other scene to which he alludes is among these Apennine limestones. . . .

His idea, therefore, of rock colour, founded on these experiences, is that of a dull or ashen grey, more or less stained by the brown of iron ochre, precisely as the Apennine limestones nearly always are; the grey being peculiarly cold and disagreeable. As we go down the very hill which stretches out from Pietra-pana[1] towards Lucca, the stones laid by the road side to mend it are of this ashen grey, with efflorescences of manganese in the fissures. The whole of Malebolge is made of this rock, 'All wrought in stone of iron-coloured grain.'

Perhaps the iron colour may be meant to predominate in Evil-pits; but the definite grey limestone colour is stated higher up, the river Styx flowing at the base of 'malignant *grey*

[1] xxxii. 29.

cliffs'[1] (the word malignant being given to the iron-coloured Malebolge also).

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 3–7.

(*Lines* 1–18.) See above, page 45.

(*Line* 2). See above, canto xi.

CANTO XIX.

(*Line* 17.) Then in the thirteenth century, men wake as if they heard an alarum through the whole vault of heaven, and true human life begins again, and the cradle of this life is the Val d'Arno. There the northern and southern nations meet; there they lay down their enmities; there they are first baptized unto John's baptism for the remission of sins; there is born, and thence exiled,—thought faithless for breaking the font of baptism to save a child from drowning, in his 'bel San Giovanni,'—the greatest of Christian poets; he who had pity even for the lost.

Now, therefore, my whole history of *Christian* architecture and painting begins with the

[1] vii. 108.

Baptistery of Florence, and with its associated Cathedral. Arnolfo brought the one into the form in which you now see it; he laid the foundation of the other, and that to purpose; and he is therefore the CAPTAIN of our first school.

For this Florentine Baptistery is the great one of the world. Here is the centre of Christian knowledge and power. [See Paradiso, xv. 134.]

Ariadne Fiorentina, Lect. ii. sec. 67, 68.

I have no doubt the story is apocryphal — of [the Ghibellines] having definitely intended the destruction of the Baptistery. It is only modern reformers who feel the absolute need of enforcing their religious opinions in so practical a manner. Such a piece of sacrilege would have been revolting to Farinata;[1] how much more to the group of Florentines whose temper is centrally represented by Dante's, to all of whom their 'bel San Giovanni' was dear, at least for its beauty, if not for its sanctity.

Val d'Arno, Lect. iv. sec. 101.

(*Line* 131.) See above, canto xvii.

[1] x. 88–93.

CANTO XX.

(*Line* 48.) From that hill of San Miniato, whose steps he knew so well, the eye commands, at the farther extremity of the Val d'Arno, the whole purple range of the mountains of Carrara, peaked and mighty, seen always against the sunset light in silent outline, the chief forms that rule the scene as twilight fades away. By this vision Dante seems to have been wholly unmoved, and, but for Lucan's mention of Aruns at Luna, would seemingly not have spoken of the Carrara hills in the whole course of his poem: when he does allude to them, he speaks of their white marble, and their command of stars and sea, but has evidently no regard for the hills themselves. There is not a single phrase or syllable throughout the poem which indicates such a regard.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 17.

(*Line* 25.) See above, canto xvii. (*bis*).

(*Line* 50.) See above, canto xiv.

(*Line* 118.) See below, canto xxxiii.

CANTO XXI.

[For the canto as a whole, see below, canto xxii.]

(*Line* 7.) [Extract from Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (Venice).] 'The Prince of Saxony went to see the Arsenal three days ago, waited on by a numerous nobility of both sexes; the Bucentaur was adorned and launched, a magnificent collation given; and we sailed a little in it. I was in company with the Signora Justiniani Gradenigo and Signorina Marina Crizzo. There were two cannons founded in his (the Prince of Saxony's) presence, and a galley built and launched in an hour's time.' (Well may Dante speak of that busy arsenal!)

Fors Clavigera, xlii.

(*Lines* 7–53.) There are, I suppose, no educated persons in Italy, and few in England, who do not profess to admire Dante; and, perhaps, out of every hundred of these admirers, three or four may have read the bit about Francesca da Rimini, the death of Ugolino, and the description of the Venetian

Arsenal. But even of these honestly studious three or four, we should rarely find one who knew why the Venetian Arsenal was described. You shall hear, if you will.

As, in the Venetian arsenal, the pitch boils in the winter time, wherewith to caulk their rotten ships . . . so, not by fire, but divine art, a thick pitch boiled there, beneath, which had plastered itself all up over the banks on either side. But in it I could see nothing, except the bubbles that its boiling raised, which from time to time made it all swell up over its whole surface, and presently fall back again depressed. And as I looked at it fixedly, and wondered, my guide drew me back hastily, saying, 'Look, look!' And when I turned, I saw behind us a black devil come running along the rocks. Ah, how wild his face! ah, how bitter his action as he came with his wings wide, light upon his feet! On his shoulder he bore a sinner, grasped by both haunches; and when he came to the bridge foot, he cried down into the pit: 'Here's an ancient from Lucca; put him under, that I may fetch more, for the land is full of such; there, for money, they make "No" into "Yes" quickly.' And he cast him in and turned back, — never mastiff fiercer after his prey. The thrown sinner plunged in the pitch, and curled himself up; but the devils from under the bridge cried out, 'There's no holy face here; here one swims otherwise than in the Serchio.' And they caught him with their hooks and pulled him under, as cooks do the meat in broth; crying, 'People play here hidden; so that they may filch in secret, if they can.'

Doubtless, you consider all this extremely absurd, and are of opinion that such things are not likely to happen in the next world. Perhaps not; nor is it clear that Dante believed they would; but I should be glad if you would tell me what you think *is* likely to happen there. In the mean time, please to observe Dante's figurative meaning, which is by no means absurd. Every one of his scenes has symbolic purpose, down to the least detail. This lake of pitch is money, which, in our own vulgar English phrase, 'sticks to people's fingers;' it clogs and plasters its margin all over, because the mind of a man bent on dishonest gain makes everything within its reach dirty; it bubbles up and down, because underhand gains nearly always involve alternate excitement and depression; and it is haunted by the most cruel and indecent of all the devils, because there is nothing so mean, and nothing so cruel, but a peculator will do it. So you may read every line figuratively, if you choose. . . .

While [Dante] has sharp punishment for thieves, forgers, and peculators, — the thieves being changed into serpents, the forgers covered with leprosy, and the peculators boiled in pitch,

—he has no punishment for bad workmen; no Tuscan mind at that day being able to conceive such a ghastly sin as a man's doing bad work wilfully. *Fors Clavigera*, xviii.

One great and infallible sign of the absence of spiritual power is the presence of the slightest taint of obscenity. Dante marked this strongly in all his representations of demons.

Modern Painters, vol. v. IX. ch. vi. sec. 19.

(*Lines* 60, 89.) See above, canto xviii.

CANTO XXII. (AND XXI.).

I think the twenty-first and twenty-second books of the Inferno the most perfect portraitures of fiendish nature which we possess; and at the same time, in their mingling of the extreme of horror (for it seems to me that the silent swiftness of the first demon, 'con l' ale aperte e sovra i piè leggiero,'[1] cannot be surpassed in dreadfulness) with ludicrous actions and images, they present the most perfect instances with which I am acquainted of the terrible grotesque.

Stones of Venice, vol. iii. ch. iii. sec. liii.

[1] xxi. 33.

(*Line* 129.) A cherub, who sweeps downward on the wing. His two wings, as they half close, form the upper part of the spur [or prop, at base of column in Baptistery of St. Mark's, Venice], and the rise of it in the front is formed by exactly the action of Alichino, swooping on the pitch lake; 'quei drizzò, volando suso, il petto.'

Stones of Venice, vol. i. ch. xxv. sec. xviii.

CANTO XXIV.

(*Lines* 82–90.) Why that horror [of the serpent]? We all feel it, yet how imaginative it is, how disproportioned to the real strength of the creature! There is more poison in an ill-kept drain,—in a pool of dish-washings at a cottage-door, than in the deadliest asp of Nile. . . . There is more venom, mortal, inevitable, in a single word, sometimes, or in the gliding entrance of a wordless thought, than ever 'vanti Libia con sua rena.' . . .

. . . Startle it; the winding stream will become a twisted arrow;—the wave of poisoned life will lash through the grass like a cast lance.[1]

[1] Compare *Purgatorio*, viii. 97–102.

It is a divine hieroglyph of the demoniac power of the earth, — of the entire earthly nature. As the bird is the clothed power of the air, so this is the clothed power of the dust; as the bird the symbol of the spirit of life, so this of the grasp and sting of death.

Queen of the Air, ii. sec. 68.

(*Line* 124.) "With Turner's adder, too, springing immortal from the Python's wound, we cannot but connect this other adder of Carpaccio's, issuing from the white skull of a great snake. Adders, according to an old fancy, were born from the jaws of their living mother. Supernatural horror attaches to this symbolic one, writhing out from between the teeth of that ophidian death's-head. And the plague, not yet fully come forth, but already about *its* father's business, venomously fastens on a frog, type of the sinner whose degradation is but the beginning of punishment. So soon the worm that dies not is also upon him — in its fang Circean poison to make the victim one with his plague, as in that terrible circle those, afflicted, whom 'vita bestial piacque e non humana.'"

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. ii.

Deadly reality, I say [of the deceiving spirit]. The puff-adder or horned asp are not more real. Unbelievable, — *those*, — unless you had seen them; no fable could have been coined out of any human brain so dreadful, within its own poor material sphere, as that blue-lipped serpent — working its way sidelong in the sand. As real, but with sting of eternal death — this worm that dies not, and fire that is not quenched, within our souls, or around them.

Time and Tide, x.

(*Lines* 143–150.) There is nothing in all the Divina Commedia of history more grotesque, yet more frightful, than the fact that . . . colours have been the sign and stimulus of the most furious and fatal passions that have rent the nations: blue against green, in the decline of the Roman Empire; black against white, in that of Florence; red against white, in the wars of the Royal houses in England; and at this moment, red against white, in the contest of anarchy and loyalty, in all the world.

Aratra Pentelici, Lect. i. sec. 13.

CANTO XXV.

(*Lines* 16–24.) "In a Venetian series of engravings illustrating Dante (published 1491) the firebreathings of the Dragon on Cacus' shoulders transform themselves into the Centaur's femininely flowing hair, to signify the inspiration of his forceful fraud. This power on the head he has because of such an angel."

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. ii.

[See below, canto xxvii.]

(*Lines* 58–62.) The eighth circle of Dante's Hell is the circle of Fraud, divided into ten gulphs; in the seventh of these gulphs are the Thieves, by Fraud, — brilliantly now represented by the men who covet their neighbours' goods and take them in any way they think safe, by high finance, sham companies, cheap goods, or any other of our popular modern ways.

Now there is not in all the Inferno quite so studied a piece of descriptive work as Dante's relation of the infection of one cursed soul of this crew by another. They change alternately into forms of men and serpents, each biting the other into this change: —

Ivy ne'er clasped
A doddered oak, as round the other's limbs
The hideous monster intertwined his own;
Then, as they both had been of burning wax,
Each melted into other.

Read the story of the three transformations for yourself (cantos xxiv., xxv.) and then note the main point of all, that the spirit of such theft is especially indicated by its intense and direct manner of blasphemy [lines 14, 15]:—

I did not mark,
Through all the gloomy circle of the abyss,
Spirit that swelled so proudly gainst its God,
Not him who headlong fell from Thebes.

The soul is Vanni Fucci's, who rifled the sacristy of St. James of Pistoja, and charged Vanni della Nona with the sacrilege, whereupon the latter suffered death.

Vanni Fucci [line 2] makes the Italian sign of the Fig,—'a fig for you.' In old English illuminated Psalters, the vignette of the Fool saying in his heart, 'There is no God,' nearly always represents him in this action.

Fors Clavigera, lxxii. and note.

The real sin of blasphemy is not in the saying, nor even in the thinking; but in the wish-

ing which is father to thought and word; and the nature of it is simply in wishing evil to anything; for as the quality of mercy is not strained, so neither that of Blasphemy, the one distilling from the clouds of Heaven, the other from the steam of the Pit. . . . Blasphemy is wishing ill to *any*thing; and its outcome is in Vanni Fucci's extreme 'ill manners' — wishing ill to God.

On the Old Road, vol. iii. sec. 96.

CANTO XXVI.

(*Lines* 107–142.) [The song of the Sirens to Ulysses was

Oh stay, and learn new wisdom from the wise.]

Is it not singular that so long ago the danger of this novelty of wisdom should have been completely discerned? Is it not stranger still that three thousand years have passed by, and we have not yet been able to learn the lesson, but are still eager to add to our knowledge, rather than to use it; and every day more passionate in discovering, more violent in competition, — are every day more cold in admiration, and more dull in reverence. Homer's Ulysses, bound to the mast, survives. Dante's Ulysses is bound

to the mast in another fashion. He, notwithstanding the protection of Athena, and after all his victories over fate, is still restless under the temptation to seek new wisdom. He goes forth past the Pillars of Hercules, cheers his crew amidst the uncompassed solitudes of the Atlantic, and perishes in sudden Charybdis of the infinite sea. In hell, the restless flame in which he is wrapt continually, among the advisers of evil, is seen, from the rocks above, like the firefly's flitting to and fro [line 29]; and the waving garment of torture, which quivers as he speaks, and aspires as he moves, condemns him to be led in eternal temptation, and to be delivered from evil never more. . . .

When instead of plying every oar to escape, as the crew of Homer's Ulysses, we row like the crew of Dante's Ulysses, and of our oars make wings for our foolish flight —

> E, volta nostra poppa nel mattino,
> de' remi facemmo ale al folle volo —

the song of the Sirens becomes fatal as never yet it has been in time. (See below, Purgatorio, canto xix.)

Eagle's Nest, Lect. iv. sec. 75, and v. sec. 79.

(*Line* 17.) See above, canto xvii.

CANTO XXVII.

(*Line* 117.) [On figurative use of hair.] "It is worth while, too, to have in mind the words of the 'black cherub' that had overheard the treacherous counsel of Guido de Montefeltro. From the moment it was uttered, to that of the sinner's death, the evil spirit says, 'stato gli sono a' crini' — lord of his fate."

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. ii.

(*Line* 98.) See above, page 15.

CANTO XXVIII.

(*Line* 12.) 'Che non erra.' I never till now, in reading this passage for my present purpose, noticed these wonderful words of Dante's, spoken of Livy. True, in the grandest sense.

Fors Clavigera, lxxxiv. note.

CANTO XXX.

(*Lines* 74, 89.) "The Florin of Florence" (says Sismondi), "through all the monetary

revolutions of all neighbouring countries, and while the bad faith of governments adulterated their coin from one end of Europe to the other, has always remained the same; it is, to-day" (I don't know when, exactly, he wrote this — but it does n't matter), "of the same weight, and bears the same name and the same stamp which it did when it was struck in 1252." It was gold of the purest title (24 carats), weighed the eighth of an ounce, and carried on one side the image of St. John Baptist, on the other the Fleur-de-lys.[1] It is the coin which Chaucer takes for the best representation of beautiful money in the Pardoner's Tale: this, in his judgment, is the fairest mask of Death.

Val d'Arno, Lect. v. sec. 117.

(*Line* 78.) Fonte Branda I last saw with Charles Norton, under the same arches where Dante saw it. We drank of it together, and walked together that evening on the hills above, where the fireflies among the scented thickets shone fitfully in the still undarkened air. *How* they shone! moving like fine broken starlight through the purple leaves. How they shone!

[1] *Paradiso*, xviii. 134.

through the sunset that faded into thunderous night as I entered Siena three days before, the white edges of the mountainous clouds still lighted from the west, and the openly golden sky calm behind the Gate of Siena's heart with its still golden words, 'Cor magis tibi Sena pandit,' and the fireflies everywhere in sky and cloud rising and falling, mixed with lightning and more intense than stars.

Præterita, vol. iii. ch. iv. closing paragraph ; written June 19, 1889.

(*Lines* 98–148.) See above, page 14.

CANTO XXXI.

The central [hell] is half joined to the lower by the power of Fraud: only in the central hell, though in a deeper pit of it (Phlegethon falls into the abyss in a Niagara of blood),[1] Fraud is still joined with human passion, but in the nether hell is passionate no more; the traitors have not natures of flesh or of fire, but of earth; and the earth-giants, the first enemies of Athena,

[1] xiv. 116; xvi. 103–105; xvii. 118, 119.

the Greek spirit of Life, stand about the pit, speechless, as towers of war. In a bright morning, this last midsummer, at Bologna, I was standing in the shade of the tower of Garisenda, which Dante says they were like [line 136]. The sun had got just behind its battlements, and sent out rays round them as from behind a mountain peak, vast and grey against the morning sky. . . . Perchance the sun may some day rise for us from behind our Towers of Treachery.

Fors Clavigera, XXIV.

(*Line* 77.) If instead of taking the quantity of exercise made necessary to their bodies by God, in the work appointed by God, they take it in hunting or shooting, they become ignorant, irreligious, and finally insane, and seek to live by fighting as well as by hunting; whence the type of Nimrod in the circle of the Hell-towers which I desired you to study in Dante.

Fors Clavigera, lxvii.

(*Lines* 130–132.) Antæus is the master of contest without use;—φιλονεικίας ἀχρήστου—and is generally the power of pure selfishness and its various inflation to insolence and degradation

to cowardice; — finding its strength only in fall back to its Earth, — he is the master, in a word, of all such kind of persons as have been writing lately about the 'interests of England.' He is, therefore, the Power invoked by Dante to place Virgil and him in the lowest circle of Hell; — 'Alcides whilom felt, — that grapple, straitened sore,' etc.

Mornings in Florence: the Sixth.

CANTO XXXII.

(*Line* 13.) Another notable point in Dante's system is the intensity of uttermost punishment given to treason, the peculiar sin of Italy, and that to which, at this day, she attributes her own misery with her own lips. An Italian, questioned as to the causes of the failure of the campaign of 1848, always makes one answer, 'We were betrayed;' and the most melancholy feature of the state of Italy is principally this, that she does not see that, of all causes to which failure might be attributed, this is at once the most disgraceful, and the most hopeless. In fact, Dante seems to me to have written almost prophetically, for the instruction of modern

Italy, and chiefly so in the sixth canto of the Purgatorio. *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. ch. viii. sec. lx.

(*Lines* 28, 29.) When [Dante] wishes to give the idea of enormous mountain size, he names Tabernicch and Pietrapana, — the one clearly chosen only for the sake of the last syllable of its name, in order to make a sound as of cracking ice, with the two sequent rhymes of the stanza, — and the other is an Apennine near Lucca. *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 6.

(*Line* 58.) This literature of the Prison-house, understanding by the word not only the cell of Newgate, but also and even more definitely the cell of the Hôtel-Dieu, the Hôpital des Fons, and the grated corridor with the dripping slabs of the Morgue, . . . I have called . . . 'Fiction mécroyante,' with literal accuracy and precision: . . . and round its Arctic pole in the Morgue, he may gather into one Caina of gelid putrescence the entire product of modern infidel imagination, amusing itself with destruction of the body, and busying itself with aberration of the mind.

On the Old Road, vol. iii. sec. 15.

(*Lines* 13–36.) See above, page 42.

(*Line* 29.) See above, canto xviii.

CANTO XXXIII.

(*Lines* 13–90.) The unfrequency of windows in the body of the [Italian villa] is partly attributed to the climate; but the total exclusion of light from some parts, as the base of the central tower, carries our thoughts back to the ancient system of Italian life, when every man's home had its dark, secret places, the abodes of his worst passions; whose shadows were alone intrusted with the motion of his thoughts; whose walls became the whited sepulchres of crime; whose echoes were never stirred except by such words as they dared not repeat; from which the rod of power, or the dagger of passion, came forth invisible; before whose stillness princes grew pale, as their fates were prophesied or fulfilled by the horoscope or the hemlock; and nations, as the whisper of anarchy or of heresy was avenged by the opening of the low doors, through which those who entered returned not.

The mind of the Italian, sweet and smiling in

its operations, deep and silent in its emotions, was thus, in some degree, typified by those abodes into which he was wont to retire from the tumult and wrath of life, to cherish or to gratify the passions which its struggles had excited; abodes which now gleam brightly and purely among the azure mountains, and by the sapphire sea, but whose stones are dropped with blood; whose vaults are black with the memory of guilt and grief unpunished and unavenged, and by whose walls the traveller hastens fearfully, when the sun has set, lest he should hear, awakening again through the horror of their chambers, the faint wail of the children of Ugolino, the ominous alarm of Bonatti,[1] or the long low cry of her who perished at Coll-Alto.

Poetry of Architecture, The Villa, I.

(*Line* 30.) Ugolino, in his dream, seemed to himself to be in the mountains 'by cause of which the Pisan cannot see Lucca;' and it is impossible to look up from Pisa to that hoary slope without remembering the awe that there is in the passage; nevertheless, it was as a hunt-

[1] *Inferno*, XX. 118.

ing-ground only that he remembered those hills.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 17.

[See above, canto xii.]

CANTO XXXIV.

(*Line* 20.) I leave you to call this deceiving spirit what you like — or to theorise about it as you like. All that I desire you to recognize is the fact of its being here, and the need of its being fought with. If you take the Bible's account of it, or Dante's, or Milton's, you will receive the image of it as a mighty spiritual creature, commanding others, and resisted by others; if you take Æschylus's or Hesiod's account of it, you will hold it for a partly elementary and unconscious adversity of fate, and partly for a group of monstrous spiritual agencies, connected with death, and begotten out of the dust; if you take a modern rationalist's, you will accept it for a mere treachery and want of vitality in our own moral nature exposing it to loathsomeness of moral disease, as the body is capable of mortification or leprosy. . . .

The deadly reality of the thing is with us, and warring against us, and on our true war with it depends whatever life we can win.

Time and Tide, x.

[For the rest of this passage, see above under Inferno, canto xxiv. 82–90.]

PURGATORIO

PURGATORIO

When we pass with Dante from the Inferno to Purgatory, we have indeed more light and air, but no more liberty; being now confined on various ledges cut into a mountain side, with a precipice on one hand and a vertical wall on the other; and, lest here also we should make any mistake about magnitudes, we are told that the ledges were eighteen feet wide,[1] and that the ascent from one to the other was by steps, made like those which go up from Florence to the church of San Miniato.[2]

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 31.

The flat ground and embanked trenches are reserved for the Inferno: . . . the entire territory of the Purgatory is a mountain, thus marking the sense of that purifying and perfecting influence in mountains which we saw the mediæval mind was so ready to suggest.[3]

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 32.

The place of the soul's purification, though a mountain, is yet by Dante subdued, wherever

[1] x. 24. [2] xii. 104. [3] *Inferno*, i. 2.

there is any pleasantness to be found upon it, from all mountainous character into grassy recesses, or slopes to rushy shore; and, in his general conception of it, resembles much more a castle mound, surrounded by terraced walks,—in the manner, for instance, of one of Turner's favourite scenes, the bank under Richmond Castle (Yorkshire); or, still more, one of the hill slopes divided by terraces, above the Rhine, in which the picturesqueness of the ground has been reduced to the form best calculated for the growing of costly wine, than any scene to which we moderns should naturally attach the term 'mountainous.'

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 3.

[In his general division] the poet thus implying in opposition, and describing in various instances, the seven virtues of Humility, Kindness, Patience, Zeal, Poverty, Abstinence, and Chastity, as adjuncts of the Christian character, in which it may occasionally fail, while the essential group of the three theological and four cardinal virtues are represented as in direct attendance on the chariot of the Deity; and all the sins of Christians are in the seventeenth

canto traced to the deficiency or aberration of Affection.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. ch. viii. sec. lxi.

CANTO I.

(*Lines* 22–27.) "The sublime passage of Dante, which the most celebrated commentators have applied to [the Cross of the South] :

> Io mi volsi a man destra, e posi mente
> all' altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
> non viste mai fuor che alla prima gente.
> Goder parea lo ciel di lor fiammelle ;
> o settentrional vedovo sito,
> poiché privato sei di mirar quelle !

"The two great stars which mark the summit and the foot of the Cross having nearly the same right ascension, it follows hence that the constellation is almost perpendicular at the moment when it passes the meridian. This circumstance is known to every nation that lives beyond the tropics, or in the southern hemisphere. It has been observed at what hour of night, in different seasons, the Cross of the South is erect, or inclined. It is a timepiece that advances very regularly nearly four minutes a day ; and no other group of stars exhibits, to

the naked eye, an observation of time so easily made. How often have we heard our guides exclaim, in the savannahs of the Venezuela, or in the desert extending from Lima to Truxillo, 'Midnight is passed, the Cross begins to bend!'"

Humboldt, quoted in *Laws of Fésole*, ch. v. sec. 17.

(*Line* 95.) Dante tells us he was ordered to descend to the shore of the lake as he entered Purgatory, to gather a *rush*, and gird himself with it, it being to him the emblem not only of rest, but of humility under chastisement, the rush (or reed) being the only plant which can grow there; 'no plant which bears leaves, or hardens its bark, can live on that shore, because it does not yield to the chastisement of its waves' [lines 103–105]. It cannot but strike the reader singularly how deep and harmonious a significance runs through all these words of Dante — how every syllable of them, the more we penetrate it, becomes a seed of farther thought! For, follow up this image of the girding with the reed, under trial, and see to whose feet it will lead us. As the grass of the earth, thought of as the herb yielding seed,

leads us to the place where our Lord commanded the multitude to sit down by companies upon the green grass; so the grass of the waters, thought of as sustaining itself among the waters of affliction, leads us to the place where a stem of it was put into our Lord's hand for his sceptre; and in the crown of thorns, and the rod of reed, was foreshown the everlasting truth of the Christian ages — that all glory was to be begun in suffering, and all power in humility.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 53.

(*Lines* 103, 104.) Modesty is 'the measuring virtue,' the virtue of *modes* or limits. . . . That yard measure of Modesty's is a curious musical reed, and will go round and round waists that are slender enough, with latent melody in every joint of it, the dark root only being soundless, moist from the wave wherein

Nulla altra pianta che facesse fronda
o indurasse vi puote aver vita.

Queen of the Air, iii. sec. 135.

CANTO II.

(*Lines* 1–9.) Dante's pieces of pure pale light are always exquisite. In the dawn on the

purgatorial mountain, first, in its pale white, he sees the 'tremolar della marina' — trembling of the sea [i. 117]; then it becomes vermilion; and at last, near sunrise, orange. These are precisely the changes of a calm and perfect dawn.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 20.

(*Lines* 16–45.) Of all the descriptions of motion in the Divina Commedia, I do not think there is another quite so fine as that in which Dante has glorified the old fable of Charon by giving a boat also to the bright sea which surrounds the mountain of Purgatory, bearing the redeemed souls to their place of trial; only an angel is now the pilot, and there is no stroke of labouring oar, for his wings are the sails.

My preceptor silent yet
Stood, while the brightness that we first discerned
Opened the form of wings: then, when he knew
The pilot, cried aloud 'Down, down; bend low
Thy knees; behold God's angel; fold thy hands:
Now shalt thou see true ministers indeed.
Lo! how all human means he sets at nought;
So that nor oar he needs, nor other sail
Except his wings, between such distant shores.

Lo ! how straight up to heaven he holds them reared,
Winnowing the air with those eternal plumes,
That not like mortal hairs fall off or change.'

As more and more toward us came, more bright
Appeared the bird of God, nor could the eye
Endure his splendour near : I mine bent down.
He drove ashore in a small bark so swift
And light, that in its course no wave it drank.
The heavenly steersman at the prow was seen,
Visibly written blessed in his looks.
Within, a hundred spirits and more there sat.

I have given this passage at length because it seems to me that Dante's most inventive adaptation of the fable of Charon to Heaven has not been regarded with the interest that it really deserves; and because, also, it is a description that should be remembered by every traveller when first he sees the white fork of the felucca sail shining on the Southern Sea. Not that Dante had ever seen such sails (I am not quite sure of this . . .); his thought was utterly irrespective of the form of canvas in any ship of the period; but it is well to be able to attach this happy image to those felucca sails, as they now float white and soft above the blue glowing of the bays of Adria. Nor are other images

wanting in them. Seen far away on the horizon, the Neapolitan felucca has the aspect of some strange bird stooping out of the air and just striking the water with its claws; while the Venetian, when its painted sails are at full swell in sunshine, is as beautiful as a butterfly with its wings half-closed.

[In the love of boats] Dante, as in nearly every other respect, being far in advance of his age. *Harbours of England.*

(*Line* 38.) Modern science has taught us that a wing cannot be anatomically joined to a shoulder; and in proportion as painters approach more and more to the scientific, as distinguished from the contemplative state of mind, they put the wings of their angels on more timidly, and dwell with greater emphasis upon the human form, and with less upon the wings, until these last become a species of decorative appendage, — a mere *sign* of an angel. But in Giotto's time an angel was a complete creature, as much believed in as a bird; and the way in which it would or might cast itself into the air, and lean hither and thither upon its plumes, was as naturally apprehended as the manner of flight of a

chough or a starling. Hence Dante's simple and most exquisite synonym for angel, 'Bird of God.'

Giotto and his Works, xvi.

(*Line* 91.) Briefly, the constant duty of every man to his fellows is to ascertain his own powers and special gifts; and to strengthen them for the help of others. Do you think Titian would have helped the world better by denying himself, and not painting; or Casella by denying himself, and not singing? The real virtue is to be ready to sing the moment people ask us; as he was, even in purgatory.

Ethics of the Dust, Lect. vi.

(*Lines* 113–120.) Dante, though modern readers never go further with him than into the Pit, is stayed only by Casella in the ascent to the Rose of Heaven.

On the Old Road, vol. iii. sec. 69.

(*Lines* 7–9.) See below, Paradiso, canto xxxi.

(*Line* 91.) See above, page 21.

CANTO III.

(*Lines* 46–51.) The similes by which [Dante] illustrates the steepness of the ascent [of Purgatory] are all taken from the Riviera of Genoa, now traversed by a good carriage road under the name of the Corniche; but as this road did not exist in Dante's time, and the steep precipices and promontories were then probably traversed by footpaths, which, as they necessarily passed in many places over crumbling and slippery limestone, were doubtless not a little dangerous, and as in the manner they commanded the bays of the sea below, and lay exposed to the full blaze of the south-eastern sun, they corresponded precisely to the situation of the path by which he ascends above the purgatorial sea, the image could not possibly have been taken from a better source for the fully conveying his idea to the reader: nor, by the way, is there reason to discredit, in *this* place, his powers of climbing; for with his usual accuracy, he has taken the angle of the path for us, saying it was considerably more than forty-five. Now a continuous mountain slope of forty-five degrees is already quite unsafe either for ascent or descent, except

by zigzag paths; and a greater than this could not be climbed, straightforward, but by help of crevices or jags in the rock, and great physical exertion besides.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 13.

(*Lines* 25–27.) See above, page 30.

(*Line* 47.) See above, Inferno, canto xvii. line 134.

CANTO IV.

(*Lines* 101, 104.) See above, Inferno, canto xvii.

CANTO V.

(*Lines* 85–129.) I have reserved, for our last example of the landscape of Dante, . . . a passage not less notable for its close description of what the writer feared and disliked, than for the ineffable tenderness, in which Dante is always raised as much above all other poets, as in softness the rose above all other flowers. . . .

Observe, Buonconte, as he dies, crosses his arms over his heart, pressing them together, partly in his pain, partly in prayer. His body

thus lies by the river shore, as on a sepulchral monument, the arms folded into a cross. The rage of the river, under the influence of the evil demon, *unlooses this cross*, dashing the body supinely away, and rolling it over and over by bank and bottom. Nothing can be truer to the action of a stream in fury than these lines. And how desolate is it all! The lonely flight, — the grisly wound, 'pierced in the throat,' — the death, without help or pity, — only the name of Mary on the lips, — and the cross folded over the heart. Then the rage of the demon and the river, — the noteless grave, — and, at last, even she who had been most trusted forgetting him, —

> Giovanna, nor none else have care of me.

There is, I feel assured, nothing else like it in all the range of poetry; a faint and harsh echo of it, only, exists in one Scottish ballad, 'The Twa Corbies.'

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 21.

Disciplining the falling waters. In the Divine work, this is the ordinance of clouds; in the human, it is properly putting the clouds to service; and first stopping the rain where they

carry it from the sea, and then keeping it pure as it goes back to the sea again.

And the correspondent Diabolic work is the arrangement of land so as to throw all the water back to the sea as fast as we can (compare Dante, Purgatorio, end of canto v.); and putting every sort of filth into the stream as it runs.

Fors Clavigera, xlvi.

CANTO VI.

See above, Inferno, canto xxxii., on line 13.

CANTO VII.

(*Lines* 73–78.) Now, almost in the opening of the Purgatory, as there at the entrance of the Inferno, we find a company of great ones resting in a grassy place. But the idea of the grass now is very different. The word now used is not 'enamel,' but 'herb,' and instead of being merely green, it is covered with flowers of many colours. With the usual mediæval accuracy, Dante insists on telling us precisely what these colours were, and how bright; which he does by naming the actual pigments used in illu-

mination, — 'Gold, and fine silver, and cochineal, and white lead, and Indian wood, serene and lucid, and fresh emerald, just broken, would have been excelled as less is by greater, by the flowers and grass of the place.' It is evident that the 'emerald' here means the emerald green of the illuminators; for a fresh emerald is no brighter than one which is not fresh, and Dante was not one to throw away his words thus. Observe, then, we have here the idea of the growth, life, and variegation of the 'green herb,' as opposed to the smalto of the Inferno; but the colours of the variegation are illustrated and defined by the reference to actual pigments; and, observe, because the other colours are rather bright, the blue ground (Indian wood, indigo?) is sober; lucid but serene; and presently two angels enter, who are dressed in green drapery, but of a paler green than the grass, which Dante marks, by telling us that it was 'the green of leaves just budded.'

In all this, I wish the reader to observe two things: first, the general carefulness of the poet in defining colour, distinguishing it precisely as a painter would (opposed to the Greek carelessness about it); and, secondly, his regarding the

grass for its greenness and variegation, rather than, as a Greek would have done, for its depth and freshness.

This greenness or brightness, and variegation, are taken up by later and modern poets, as the things intended to be chiefly expressed by the word 'enamelled'; and, gradually, the term is taken to indicate any kind of bright and interchangeable colouring; there being always this much of propriety about it, when used of greensward, that such sward is indeed, like enamel, a coat of bright colour on a comparatively dark ground; and is thus a sort of natural jewelry and painter's work, different from loose and large vegetation. The word is often awkwardly and falsely used, by the later poets, of all kinds of growth and colour; as by Milton of the flowers of Paradise showing themselves over its wall; but it retains, nevertheless, through all its jaded inanity, some half-unconscious vestige of the old sense, even to the present day.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 49, 50.

See above, Inferno, canto iv., on line 118.

CANTO VIII.

(*Lines* 97–102.) See above, Inferno, canto xxiv.

(*Line* 114.) See above, Inferno, canto ix., on line 52.

CANTO IX.

(*Lines* 95–102.) As we had to complain of Dante for not enough noticing the colours of rocks in wild nature, let us do him the justice to refer to his noble symbolic use of their colours when seen in the hewn block.

> The lowest stair was marble white, so smooth
> And polished that therein my mirrored form
> Distinct I saw. The next of hue more dark
> Than sablest grain, a rough and singëd block,
> Cracked lengthwise and across. The third, that lay
> Massy above, seemed porphyry, that flowed
> Red as the life-blood spouting from a vein.

This stair is at the gate of Purgatory. The white step means sincerity of conscience; the black, contrition; the purple (I believe), pardon by the Atonement.

Modern Painters, vol. iv. ch. viii. sec. 15, note.

(*Line* 115.) The same whitish-grey idea is given again definitely in describing the robe of the purgatorial or penance angel, which is 'of the colour of ashes, or earth dug dry.' Ashes necessarily mean *wood*-ashes in an Italian mind, so that we get the tone very pale; and there can be no doubt whatever about the hue meant, because it is constantly seen on the sunny sides of the Italian hills, produced by the scorching of the ground, a dusty and lifeless whitish grey, utterly painful and oppressive.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 7.

Fors, the Key-bearer, means the strength of Ulysses, or of Patience . . . portress at a gate which she cannot open till you have waited long; and her robe is of the colour of ashes, or dry earth. See Cary's translation of the ninth book of Dante's Purgatory, line 115.

Fors Clavigera, ii.

(*Lines* 117–126.) Let us return to [Milton's] lines respecting the power of the keys, for now we can understand them. Note the difference between Milton and Dante in their interpretation of this power: for once, the latter

is weaker in thought; he supposes *both* the keys to be of the gate of heaven; one is of gold, the other of silver: they are given by St. Peter to the sentinel angel; and it is not easy to determine the meaning either of the substances of the three steps of the gate, or of the two keys. But Milton makes one, of gold, the key of heaven; the other, of iron, the key of the prison in which the wicked teachers are to be bound who 'have taken away the key of knowledge, yet entered not in themselves.'

Sesame and Lilies, Lect. i. sec. 24.

CANTO X.

(*Line* 27.) Figure 5 from Ghirlandajo is pretty illustrative of Dante's idea of terraces on the purgatorial mountain.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 16.

(*Line* 31.) I do not know if it has been observed that while Dante rightly connects architecture, as the most permanent expression of the pride of humanity, whether just or unjust, with the first cornice of Purgatory, he indicates its noble function by engraving upon it, in per-

fect sculpture, the stories which rebuke the errors and purify the purposes of noblest souls.

On the Old Road, vol. i. sec. 291.

(*Line* 24.) See above, p. 121.

CANTO XI.

(*Line* 95.) [The Franciscans,] for whom Giotto was continually painting under Dante's advice.[1]

Mornings in Florence: the First.

What kind of boy is this, think you, who can make Titian his copyist, — Dante his friend? What new power is here which is to change the heart of Italy?

'You shall see things — as they Are.'

'And the least with the greatest, because God made them.'

'And the greatest with the least, because God made *you*, and gave you eyes and a heart.'

Mornings in Florence: the Second.

Cimabue did not venture to leave the sphere of conventionally reverenced dignity. He still

[1] See *Paradiso*, xi.

painted — though beautifully — only the Madonna, and the St. Joseph, and the Christ. These he made living, — Florence asked no more: and 'Credette Cimabue nella pintura tener lo campo.'

But Giotto came from the field, and saw with his simple eyes a lowlier worth. And he painted — the Madonna, and St. Joseph, and the Christ, — yes, by all means if you choose to call them so, but essentially, — Mamma, Papa, and the Baby. And all Italy threw up its cap, — 'Ora ha Giotto il grido.'

For he defines, explains, and exalts every sweet incident of human nature; and makes dear to daily life every mystic imagination of natures greater than our own. He reconciles, while he intensifies, every virtue of domestic and monastic thought. He makes the simplest household duties sacred, and the highest religious passions serviceable and just.

Mornings in Florence: the Second.

We ought to measure the value of art less by its executive than by its moral power. Giotto was not indeed one of the most accomplished painters, but he was one of the greatest men,

who ever lived. He was the first master of his time, in architecture as well as in painting; he was the friend of Dante, and the undisputed interpreter of religious truth, by means of painting, over the whole of Italy.

Giotto and his Works.

Returning to Florence, he painted Dante, about the year 1300, the thirty-fifth year of Dante's life, the twenty-fourth of his own; Lord Lindsay's evidence on this point[1] seems quite conclusive. It is impossible to overrate the value of the work of Giotto in the Bargello, both for its own intrinsic beauty, and as being executed in this year, which is not only that in which the Divina Commedia opens, but, as I think, the culminating period in the history of the art of the middle ages.

Giotto and his Works.

There was no fame of artists in those archaic days. Every year, every hour saw some one rise to surpass what had been done before. And there was always better work to be done but never any credit to be got by it. The artist

[1] *Christian Art*, vol. ii. p. 174.

lived in an atmosphere of perpetual, wholesome, inevitable eclipse. Do as well as you choose to-day, — make the whole Borgo dance with delight, they would dance to a better man's pipe to-morrow. *Credette Cimabue nella pittura tener lo campo, et ora ha Giotto il grido.* This was the fate, the necessary fate, even of the strongest. They could only hope to be remembered as links in an endless chain. For the weaker men it was no use even to put their name on their works. They did not. If they could not work for joy and for love, and take their part simply in the choir of human toil, they might throw up their tools. But now it is far otherwise.

On the Old Road, vol. i. sec. 281.

CANTO XII.

(*Lines* 64–99.) There was probably never a period in which the influence of art over the minds of men seemed to depend less on its merely *imitative* power, than the close of the thirteenth century. No painting or sculpture at that time reached more than a rude resemblance of reality. Its despised perspective, im-

perfect chiaroscuro, and unrestrained flights of fantastic imagination, separated the artist's work from nature by an interval which there was no attempt to disguise, and little to diminish. And yet at this very period, the greatest poet of that, or perhaps of any other age, and the attached friend of its greatest painter, who must over and over again have held full and free conversation with him respecting the objects of his art, speaks in the following terms of painting, supposed to be carried to its highest perfection: —

Qual di pennel fu maestro, o di stile
che ritraesse l' ombre, e i tratti, ch' ivi
mirar farieno ogn' ingegno sottile?
Morti li morti, e i vivi parean vivi:
non vide me' di me chi vide il vero,
quant' io calcai fin che chinato givi.

What master of the pencil, or the style,
Had traced the shades and lines that might have made
The subtlest workman wonder? *Dead,* the *dead,*
The living seemed alive; with clearer view
His eye beheld not, who beheld the truth,
Than mine what I did tread on, while I went,
Low bending.

Dante has here clearly no other idea of the

highest art than that it should bring back, as in a mirror or vision, the aspect of things passed or absent. The scenes of which he speaks are, on the pavement, for ever represented by angelic power, so that the souls which traverse this circle of the rock may see them, as if the years of the world had been rolled back, and they again stood beside the actors in the moment of action. Nor do I think that Dante's authority is absolutely necessary to compel us to admit that such art as this *might*, indeed, be the highest possible.

Whatever delight we may have been in the habit of getting in pictures, if it were but truly offered to us to remove at our will the canvas from the frame, and in lieu of it to behold, fixed for ever, the image of some of those mighty scenes which it has been our way to make mere themes for the artist's fancy; if, for instance, we could again behold the Magdalene receiving her pardon at Christ's feet, or the disciples sitting with Him at the table of Emmaus; and this not feebly nor fancifully, but as if some silver mirror, that had leaned against the wall of the chamber, had been miraculously commanded to retain for ever the colours that

had flashed upon it for an instant, — would we not part with our picture — Titian's or Veronese's though it might be?

Yes, the reader answers, in the instance of such scenes as these, but not if the scene represented were uninteresting. Not, indeed, if it were vulgar or painful; but we are not yet certain that the art which represents what is vulgar or painful is itself of much value; and with respect to the art whose aim is beauty, even of an inferior order, it seems that Dante's idea of its perfection has still much evidence in its favour. For among persons of native good sense, and courage enough to speak their minds, we shall often find a considerable degree of doubt as to the use of art, in consequence of their habitual comparison of it with reality. 'What is the use, to me, of the painted landscape?' they will ask; 'I see more beautiful and perfect landscapes every day of my life in my forenoon walk.' 'What is the use, to me, of the painted effigy of hero or beauty? I can see a stamp of higher heroism, and light of purer beauty, on the faces around me, utterly inexpressible by the highest human skill.' Now, it is evident that to persons of this temper the

only valuable pictures would indeed be *mirrors*, reflecting permanently the images of the things in which they took delight, and of the faces that they loved. 'Nay,' but the reader interrupts (if he is of the Idealist school), 'I deny that more beautiful things are to be seen in nature than in art; on the contrary, everything in nature is faulty, and art represents nature as perfected.' Be it so. Must, therefore, this perfected nature be imperfectly represented? Is it absolutely required of the painter, who has conceived perfection, that he should so paint it as to look only like a picture? Or is not Dante's view of the matter right even here, and would it not be well that the perfect conception of Pallas should be so given as to look like Pallas herself, rather than merely like the picture of Pallas? It is not easy for us to answer this question rightly. . . . But we must not rashly come to the conclusion that such art would indeed be the highest possible.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. ii. sec. 5–7.

(*Line* 68.) And with this expression of the Greek ideal of sculpture, I wish you to join the early Italian, summed in a single line by Dante

— 'non vide me' di me chi vide 'l vero.' Read the 12th canto of the 'Purgatory,' and learn that whole passage by heart; and if you ever chance to go to Pistoja, look at La Robbia's coloured porcelain bas-reliefs of the seven works of Mercy on the front of the hospital there; and note especially the faces of the two sick men — one at the point of death, and the other in the first peace and long drawn breathing of health after fever — and you will know what Dante meant by the preceding line, 'Morti li morti, e i vivi parean vivi.'

Aratra Pentelici, Lect. iv. sec. 129.

(*Line* 104.) See above, page 121.

CANTO XIII.

(*Line* 32.) KINDNESS. Usually called Charity; but this virtue in its full sense is one of the attendant spirits by the Throne; the Kindness here meant is Charity with a special object; or Friendship and Kindness, as opposed to Envy, which has always, in like manner, a special object. Hence the love of Orestes and Pylades is given as an instance of the virtue of

Friendship; and the Virgin's 'They have no wine,' at Cana, of general kindness and sympathy with others' pleasure.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. ch. viii. sec. lxi., note.

CANTO XIV.

(*Line* 93.) I don't say that you can fancy what you like, to the degree of receiving it for truth. Heaven forbid we should have such a power as that, for it would be one of voluntary madness. But we are, in the most natural and rational health, able to foster the fancy, up to the point of influencing our feelings and character in the strongest way; and for the strength of that healthy imaginative faculty, and all the blending of the good and grace, 'richiesto al vero ed al trastullo' we are wholly responsible.

Art of England, Lect. iv.

(*Line* 139.) Of these nymphs, Aglauros, the dweller in the fields, is the envy or malice of the earth; she answers nearly to the envy of Cain, the tiller of the ground, against his shepherd brother, in her own envy against her two sisters, Hesse, the cloud dew, who is the be-

loved of the shepherd Mercury ; and Pandrosos the diffused dew, or dew of heaven. Literally you have in this myth the words of the blessing of Esau — 'Thy dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above.' Aglauros is for her envy turned into a black stone; and hers is one of the voices, — the other being that of Cain, — which haunts the circle of envy in the Purgatory : —

Io sono Aglauro, che divenni sasso.

Queen of the Air, i. sec. 38.

CANTO XVI.

(*Lines* 115–120.) On the 13th of December in 1250 died at Ferentino, in Apulia, the second Frederick, Emperor of Germany ; the second also of the two great lights which in his lifetime, according to Dante's astronomy, ruled the world, whose light being quenched, 'the land which was once the residence of courtesy and valour, became the haunt of all men who are ashamed to be near the good, or to speak to them.'

The 'Paese che Adige e Po riga' is of course Lombardy ; and might have been enough dis-

tinguished by the name of its principal river. But Dante has an especial reason for naming the Adige. It is always by the valley of the Adige that the power of the German Cæsars descends on Italy; and that battlemented bridge, which doubtless many of you remember, thrown over the Adige at Verona, was so built that the German riders might have secure and constant access to the city.

Val d' Arno, Lect. i. sec. 2.

(*Line* 142.) Anger, on the purgatorial mountain, is in like manner imaged, because of its blindness and wildness, by the Alpine clouds. As they emerge from its mist they see the white light radiated through the fading folds of it; and, except this appointed cloud, no other can touch the mountain of purification.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 20.

(*Line* 5.) See above, Inferno, canto viii.

CANTO XVII.

(*Lines* 1–9.) The clouds of anger, in Purgatory, can only be figured to the reader who has —

On an Alpine height been ta'en by cloud,
Through which thou sawest no better than the mole
Doth through opacous membrane.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 18.

(*Line* 1.) See above, Inferno, canto xiv.

CANTO XVIII.

(*Line* 96.) Why is it, you workmen, that you . . . mock at us in your hearts . . . you make yourselves our toys . . . I am afraid your patience has been too much like yonder poor Italian child's; and over that genius of yours, low laid by the Matin shore, if it expired so, the lament for Archytas would have to be sung again; 'pulveris exigui — munera.' Suppose you were to shake off the dust again! cleanse your wings, like the morning bees on that Matin promontory; rise, in noble *impatience*, for there is such a thing: the impatience of the Fourth Cornice.

Cui buon voler e giusto amor cavalca.

Shall we try, together, to think over that Haste, when the May mornings come?

On the Old Road, vol. ii. sec. 58.

CANTO XIX.

(*Lines* 1–75.) On the other hand, the redeemable sins of avarice and prodigality are, in Dante's sight, those which are without deliberate or calculated operation. The lust, or lavishness, of riches can be purged, so long as there has been no servile consistency of dispute and competition for them. The sin is spoken of as that of degradation by the love of earth; it is purified by deeper humiliation — the souls crawl on their bellies; their chant is 'my soul cleaveth unto the dust.' But the spirits thus condemned are all recognizable,[1] and even the worst examples of the thirst for gold, which they are compelled to tell the histories of during the night, are of men swept by the passion of avarice into violent crime, but not sold to its steady work.

The precept given to each of these spirits for its deliverance is — Turn thine eyes to the lucre (lure) which the Eternal King rolls with the mighty wheels. Otherwise, the wheels of the 'Greater Fortune,' of which the constella-

[1] See above, *Inferno*, vii., on lines 21–66.

tion is ascending when Dante's dream begins. Compare George Herbert: —

> Lift up thy head;
> Take stars for money; stars, not to be told
> By any art, yet to be purchased.

And Plato's notable sentence in the third book of the *Polity* — 'Tell them they have divine gold and silver in their souls for ever; that they need no money stamped of men — neither may they otherwise than impiously mingle the gathering of the divine with the mortal treasure, *for through that which the law of the multitude has coined, endless crimes have been done and suffered; but in theirs is neither pollution nor sorrow.*'

At the entrance of this place of punishment an evil spirit is seen by Dante, quite other than the 'Gran Nemico.'[1] The great enemy is obeyed knowingly and willingly; but this spirit — feminine — and called a Siren — is the '*Deceitfulness* of riches,' ἀπάτη πλούτου of the Gospels, winning obedience by guile. This is the Idol of riches, made doubly phantasmal by Dante's seeing her in a dream. She is lovely to look

[1] Compare *Inferno*, vi. 115.

upon, and enchants by her sweet singing, but her womb is loathsome. Now Dante does not call her one of the Sirens carelessly, any more than he speaks of Charybdis carelessly; and though he had got at the meaning of the Homeric fable only through Virgil's obscure tradition of it, the clue he has given us is quite enough. Bacon's interpretation 'the Sirens, *or pleasures*,' which has become universal since his time, is opposed alike to Plato's meaning and Homer's. The Sirens are not pleasures, but *Desires:* in the Odyssey they are the phantoms of vain desire; but in Plato's Vision of Destiny, phantoms of divine desire; singing each a different note on the circles of the distaff of Necessity, but forming one harmony, to which the three great Fates put words. Dante, however, adopted the Homeric conception of them, which was that they were demons of the Imagination, not carnal; (desire of the eyes; not lust of the flesh); therefore said to be daughters of the Muses. Yet not of the Muses, heavenly or historical, but of the Muse of pleasure; and they are at first winged, because even vain hope excites and helps when first formed; but afterwards, contending for the pos-

session of the imagination with the Muses themselves, they are deprived of their wings.

And thus we are to distinguish the Siren power from the power of Circe, who is no daughter of the Muses, but of the strong elements, Sun and Sea; her power is that of frank and full vital pleasure, which, if governed and watched, nourishes men; but, unwatched, and having no 'moly,' bitterness or delay, mixed with it, turns men into beasts, but does not slay them, — leaves them, on the contrary, power of revival. She is herself indeed an Enchantress; — pure Animal life; transforming — or degrading — but always wonderful. . . .

But the deadly Sirens are in all things opposed to the Circean power. They promise pleasure, but never give it. They nourish in no wise; but slay by slow death. And whereas they corrupt the heart and the head, instead of merely betraying the senses, there is no recovery from their power; they do not tear nor scratch, like Scylla, but the men who have listened to them are poisoned and waste away. Note that the Sirens' field is covered not merely with the bones, but with the *skins*, of those who have been consumed there. They address

themselves, in the part of the song which Homer gives, not to the passions of Ulysses, but to his vanity, and the only man who ever came within hearing of them, and escaped untempted, was Orpheus, who silenced the vain imaginations by singing the praises of the gods.

It is, then, one of these Sirens whom Dante takes as the phantasm or deceitfulness of riches; but note further, that she says it was her song that deceived Ulysses. Look back to Dante's account of Ulysses' death, and we find it was not the love of money, but pride of knowledge,[1] that betrayed him; whence we get the clue to Dante's complete meaning: that the souls whose love of wealth is pardonable have been first deceived into pursuit of it by a dream of its higher uses, or by ambition. His Siren is therefore the Philotimé of Spenser, daughter of Mammon —

> Whom all that folk with such contention
> Do flock about, my deare, my daughter is —
> Honour and dignitie from her alone
> Derived are.

By comparing Spenser's entire account of this Philotimé with Dante's of the Wealth-Siren,

[1] *Inferno*, xxvi. 97–99.

we shall get at the full meaning of both poets; but that of Homer lies hidden much more deeply. For his Sirens are indefinite; and they are the desires of any evil thing; power of wealth is not specially indicated by him, until, escaping the harmonious danger of imagination, Ulysses has to choose between two practical ways of life, indicated by the two *rocks* of Scylla and Charybdis. The monsters that haunt them are quite distinct from the rocks themselves, which, having many other subordinate significations, are in the main Labour and Idleness, or getting and spending; each with its attendant monster, or betraying demon. The rock of gaining has its summit in the clouds, invisible, and not to be climbed; that of spending is low, but marked by the cursed fig-tree, which has leaves, but no fruit. We know the type elsewhere; and there is a curious lateral allusion to it by Dante when Jacopo di Sant' Andrea,[1] who had ruined himself by profusion and committed suicide, scatters the leaves of the bush of Lotto degli Agli, endeavouring to hide himself among them.

Munera Pulveris, ch. iii. sec. 88–93.

[1] *Inferno*, xiii. 115–123.

(*Line* 33.) The tendency to burlesque jest is both in France and England only an effervescence from the *cloaca maxima* of the putrid instincts which fasten themselves on national sin, and are, in the midst of the luxury of European capitals, what Dante meant when he wrote, *quel mi svegliò col puzzo*, of the body of the Wealth-Siren; the mocking levity and mocking gloom being equally signs of the death of the soul; just as, contrariwise, a passionate seriousness and passionate joyfulness are signs of its full life in works such as those of Angelico, Luini, Ghiberti, or La Robbia.

On the Old Road, vol. i. sec. 287.

(*Line* 73.) See above, page 43.

CANTO XX.

See above, page 43.

CANTO XXI.

(*Lines* 46–50.) See above, canto xvi. 142.

CANTO XXII.

(*Line* 133.) "The tree, with roots in air, whose sweet fruit is, in Purgatory, alternately,

to gluttonous souls, temptation, and purifying punishment — watered, Landino interprets, by the descending spray of Lethe — signifies that these souls have forgotten the source and limits of earthly pleasure, seeking vainly in it satisfaction for the hungry and immortal spirit."

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. ii.

(*Line* 46.) See above, Inferno, canto vii., on lines 56, 57.

CANTO XXIV.

(*Lines* 20–24.) Martin died, as you may remember, of eating Bolsena eels, — that being his share in the miracles of the lake; and you will do well to remember at the same time, that the price of the lake eels was three soldi a pound; and that Niccola of Pisa worked at Siena for six soldi a day, and his son Giovanni for four.

Val d' Arno, Lect. x. sec. 261.

CANTO XXVI.

"Now in the Purgatorio, Lust is the last sin of which we are to be made pure, and it has to be burnt out of us; being itself as searching as fire, as smouldering, devouring, and all

that, Corruptio optimi pessima: and it is the most searching and lasting of evils, because it really is a corruption attendant on true Love, which is eternal — whatever the word means. . . . And I think that Dante connected the purifying pains of his intermediate state with actual sufferings in this life, working out repentance, — in himself and others."

Tyrwhitt, quoted in *Ariadne Fiorentina*, app. ii. sec. 254 n.

(*Lines* 4–8.) That is a slight touch; he has not gone to Ætna nor Pelorus for fuel; but we shall not soon recover from it — he has taken our breath away and leaves us gasping. No smoke nor cinders there. Pure, white, hurtling, formless flame; very fire crystal, we cannot make spires nor waves of it, nor divide it, nor walk on it; there is no question about singeing soles of feet. It is lambent annihilation.

Modern Painters, vol. ii. II. ch. iii. sec. 2.

Dante, who of all poets is the most subtle in his sense of every kind of effect of light — though he has been thought by the public to know that of fire only. Again and again, his ghosts wonder that there is no shadow cast by

Dante's body; and is the poet's friend [Giotto], *because* a painter, likely, therefore, not to have known that mortal substance casts shadow, and terrestrial flame, light? Nay, the passage in the 'Purgatorio' where the shadows from the morning sunshine make the flames redder, reaches the accuracy of Newtonian science.

Mornings in Florence: the Third.

(*Line* 6.) There is only one more point to be noticed in the Dantesque landscape; namely, the feeling entertained by the poet towards the sky. And the love of mountains is so closely connected with the love of clouds, the sublimity of both depending much on their association, that, having found Dante regardless of the Carrara mountains as seen from San Miniato, we may well expect to find him equally regardless of the clouds in which the sun sank behind them. Accordingly, we find that his only pleasure in the sky depends on its 'white clearness,' — that turning into 'bianca aspette di cilestro' which is so peculiarly characteristic of fine days in Italy. His pieces of pure pale light are always exquisite.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 20.

CANTO XXVII.

See also above, canto xxvi.

(*Lines* 97–108.) The vision of Rachel and Leah has been always, and with unquestionable truth, received as a type of the Active and Contemplative life, and as an introduction to the two divisions of the paradise which Dante is about to enter. . . . Leah gathers the flowers to decorate *herself*, and delights in *Her Own* Labour. Rachel sits silent, contemplating herself, and delights in *Her Own* Image. These are the types of the Unglorified Active and Contemplative powers of Man. But Beatrice and Matilda[1] are the same powers, Glorified. And how are they Glorified? Leah took delight in her own labour; but Matilda — 'in operibus *manuum Tuarum*' — *in God's labour:* Rachel in the sight of her own face; Beatrice in the sight of *God's face*.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 37.

(*Line* 68.) See above, Inferno, canto xv.

(*Line* 99.) See below, canto xxviii.

(*Lines* 131, 132.) See below.

[1] xxviii. 40.

CANTO XXVIII.

(*Line* 2.) As Homer gave us an ideal landscape, which even a god might have been pleased to behold, so Dante gives us, fortunately, an ideal landscape, which is specially intended for the terrestrial paradise. And it will doubtless be with some surprise, after our reflections above on the general tone of Dante's feelings, that we find ourselves here first entering a *forest*, and that even a *thick* forest. But there is a peculiar meaning in this. With any other poet than Dante, it might have been regarded as a wanton inconsistency. Not so with him: by glancing back to the two lines which explain the nature of Paradise, we shall see what he means by it. Virgil tells him, as he enters it, 'Henceforward, take thine own pleasure for guide; thou art beyond the steep ways, and beyond all Art;'[1] meaning, that the perfectly purified and noble human creature, having no pleasure but in right, is past all effort, and past all *rule*. Art has no existence for such a being. Hence, the first aim of Dante, in his landscape imagery, is to show

[1] xxvii. 131, 132.

evidence of this perfect liberty, and of the purity and sinlessness of the new nature, converting pathless ways into happy ones. So that all those fences and formalisms which had been needed for him in imperfection, are removed in this paradise; and even the pathlessness of the wood, the most dreadful thing possible to him in his days of sin and shortcoming,[1] is now a joy to him in his days of purity. And as the fencelessness and thicket of sin led to the fettered and fearful order of eternal punishment, so the fencelessness and thicket of the free virtue lead to the loving and constellated order of eternal happiness.

This forest, then, is very like that of Colonos in several respects — in its peace and sweetness, and number of birds; it differs from it only in letting a light breeze through it, being therefore somewhat thinner than the Greek wood; the tender lines which tell of the voices of the birds mingling with the wind [lines 17–21] and of the leaves all turning one way before it [line 11] have been more or less copied by every poet since Dante's time. They are, so far as I know, the sweetest passage of wood description which exists in literature.

[1] *Inferno*, i. 2, 5; ii. 142.

Before, however, Dante has gone far in this wood [line 24], — that is to say, only so far as to have lost sight of the place where he entered it, or, rather, I suppose, of the light under the boughs of the outside trees, and it must have been a very thin wood indeed if he did not do this in some quarter of a mile's walk, — he comes to a little river, three paces over, which bends the blades of grass to the left, with a meadow on the other side of it; and in this meadow

A lady, graced with solitude, who went
  Singing, and setting flower by flower apart,
By which the path she walked on was besprent.
'Ah, lady beautiful, that basking art
  In beams of love, if I may trust thy face,
Which useth to bear witness of the heart,
Let liking come on thee,' said I, 'to trace
  Thy path a little closer to the shore,
Where I may reap the hearing of thy lays.
Thou mindest me, how Proserpine of yore
  Appeared in such a place, what time her mother
Lost her, and she the spring, for evermore.'
As, pointing downwards and to one another
  Her feet, a lady bendeth in the dance,
And barely setteth one before the other,
Thus, on the scarlet and the saffron glance
  Of flowers, with motion maidenlike she bent

(Her modest eyelids drooping and askance);
And there she gave my wishes their content,
Approaching, so that her sweet melodies
Arrived upon mine ear with what they meant.
When first she came amongst the blades, that rise,
Already wetted, from the goodly river,
She graced me by the lifting of her eyes.

CAYLEY.

I have given this passage at length, because, for our purposes, it is by much the most important, not only in Dante, but in the whole circle of poetry. This lady, observe, stands on the opposite side of the little stream, which presently she explains to Dante is Lethe, having power to cause forgetfulness of all evil, and she stands just among the bent blades of grass at its edge.

She is first seen gathering flower from flower, then 'passing continually the multitudinous flowers through her hands' [line 68], smiling at the same time so brightly, that her first address to Dante is to prevent him from wondering at her, saying 'if he will remember the verse of the ninety-second Psalm, beginning *Delectasti*, he will know why she is so happy.'

And turning to the verse of the Psalm, we find it written, 'Thou, Lord, hast made me glad *through Thy works*. I will triumph *in the*

works of Thy hands;' or, in the very words in which Dante would read it, —

> Quia delectasti me, Domine, in factura Tua,
> Et in operibus manuum Tuarum exultabo.

Now we could not for an instant have had any difficulty in understanding this, but that, some way farther on in the poem, this lady is called Matilda,[1] and it is with reason supposed by the commentators to be the great Countess Matilda of the eleventh century, — notable equally for her ceaseless activity, her brilliant political genius, her perfect piety, and her deep reverence for the See of Rome. This Countess Matilda is therefore Dante's guide in the terrestrial paradise, as Beatrice is afterwards in the celestial; each of them having a spiritual and symbolic character in their glorified state, yet retaining their definite personality.

The question is, then, what is the symbolic character of the Countess Matilda, as the guiding spirit of the terrestrial paradise? . . . Dante distinguishes . . . not between earth and heaven, but between perfect and imperfect happiness, whether in earth or heaven. The

[1] xxxiii. 119.

active life which has only the service of man for its end, and therefore gathers flowers, with Leah [see above, canto xxvii.], for its own decoration, is indeed happy, but not perfectly so; it has only the happiness of the dream, belonging essentially to the dream of human life, and passing away with it. But the active life which labors for the more and more discovery of God's work, is perfectly happy, and is the life of the terrestrial paradise, being a true foretaste of heaven, and beginning in earth, as heaven's vestibule. . . . The flowers, which are to the mediæval heart the chief work of God, are forever passing through Matilda's *hands*.

Now, therefore, we see that Dante, as the great prophetic exponent of the heart of the Middle Ages, has, by the lips of the spirit of Matilda, declared the mediæval faith, — that all perfect active life was 'the expression of man's delight *in God's work;*' and that all their political and warlike energy, as fully shown in the mortal life of Matilda, was yet inferior and impure, — the energy of the dream, — compared with that which on the opposite bank of Lethe stood 'choosing flower from flower.' And what joy and peace there were in this work

is marked by Matilda's being the person who draws Dante through the stream of Lethe, so as to make him forget all sin, and all sorrow: throwing her arms round him, she plunges his head under the waves of it; then draws him through, crying to him, '*hold me, hold me*' (tiemmi, tiemmi),[1] and so presents him, thus bathed, free from all painful memory, at the feet of the spirit of more heavenly contemplation. . . .

I called this passage the most important, for our present purposes, in the whole circle of poetry. For it contains the first great confession of the discovery by the human race (I mean as a matter of experience, not of revelation), that their happiness was not in themselves, and that their labour was not to have their own service as its chief end. It embodies in a few syllables the *sealing* difference between the Greek and the mediæval, in that the former sought the flower and herb for his own uses, the latter for God's honour; the former, primarily and on principle, contemplated his own beauty and the workings of his own mind, and the latter, primarily and on principle, contem-

[1] xxxi. 91–96.

plated Christ's beauty and the workings of the mind of Christ.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 34–40.

(*Lines* 26, 27.) The best lesson which we can finally take to ourselves, in leaving these sweet fields of the mediæval landscape, is the memory that, in spite of all the fettered habits of thought of his age, this great Dante, this inspired exponent of what lay deepest at the heart of the early Church, placed his terrestrial paradise where there had ceased to be fence or division, and where the grass of the earth was bowed down, in unity of direction, only by the soft waves that bore with them the forgetfulness of evil.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 53.

(*Line* 41.) The name of Dante's great Matilda who, on the edge of happy Lethe, stood, wreathing flowers with flowers.

Sesame and Lilies, Lect. ii. sec. 94.

(*Line* 31.) See above, Inferno, canto ii.

(*Line* 40.) See above, canto xxvii.

CANTO XXIX.

(*Line* 77.) Gray, — when deep, the second violet, giving Dante's full chord of the seven colors.

Deucalion, ch. vii. sec. 32.

(*Line* 108.) [The Lombardic Griffin (see plate) (of the cathedral of Verona)] is a profound expression of the most passionate symbolism. . . . In its unity of lion and eagle, the workman of the Middle Ages always meant to set forth the unity of the human and divine natures. In this unity it bears up the pillars of the Church, set forever as the corner stone. [The griffin carries on his back one of the main pillars of the porch of the cathedral.]

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. viii. sec. 21.

(*Line* 122.) The peculiar beauty of most of the Italian conceptions of Charity is in the subjection of mere munificence to the glowing of her love, always represented by flames; . . . with Dante, inflaming her whole form, so that, in a furnace of clear fire, she could not have been discerned.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. chap. viii. sec. lxxxii.

How much more significance might be given to the representation of Love, by amplifying with tenderness the thought of Dante; that is to say, by representing the loveliness of her face and form as all flushed with glow of crimson light, and, as she descended through heaven, all its clouds coloured by her presence as they are by sunset.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. chap. viii. sec. 7.

In the hands of its early and earnest masters, in whom fancy could not overthrow the foundations of faith, personification is often thoroughly noble and lovely; the earlier conditions of it being just as much more spiritual and vital than the later ones, as the still earlier symbolism was more spiritual than they. Compare, for instance, Dante's burning Charity, running and returning at the wheels of the chariot of God.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. chap. viii. sec. lvi.

The other class [of the old Reds], to which I myself do partly, and desire wholly, to belong, as I told you, reddest of the red, that is to say full crimson, or even dark crimson, passing into that deep colour of the blood, which made the

Spaniards call it blue, instead of red, and which the Greeks call φοινίκεος, being an intense phœnix or flamingo colour: and this not merely, as in the flamingo feathers, a colour on the outside, but going through and through, ruby-wise; so that Dante, who is one of the few people who have ever beheld our queen full in the face, says of her that if she had been in a fire, he could not have seen her at all, so fire colour she was, all through. *Fors Clavigera*, vii.

(*Line* 126.) [Giotto's 'Poverty' at Assisi.] Though she and her bridesmaids are sisters, they are not dressed alike; but one in red; and one in green; and one, robe, flesh and spirit, a statue of Snow: —

> La terza parea neve testé mossa.
>
> *Fors Clavigera*, xlv.

CANTO XXX.

(*Lines* 31–33.) Vert (viridis), from the same root as the words 'virtue' and 'virgin,' — the colour of the green rod in budding spring; the noble life of youth, born in the *spirit*, — as the scarlet means, the life of noble

youth, in flesh. Therefore, the Spirit of Beatrice is dressed in green, over *scarlet* (not rose; — observe this specially).

Deucalion, ch. vii. sec. 32, and note.

(*Lines* 85, 86.) The 'vivi travi,' — living rafters of Dante's Apennine.

Proserpina, ch. iii. sec. 29.

(*Lines* 85–91.) Truly, it is unfair of Dante, that when he is going to use snow for a lovely image, and speak of it as melting away under heavenly sunshine, he must needs put it on the Apennines, not on the Alps. . . . [Compare] Scott's 'The rock that gave it [snow] rest.' Dante could not think of his 'cut rocks' as giving rest even to snow. He must put it on the pine branches, if it is to be at peace.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 19.

CANTO XXXI.

(*Lines* 91–96.) See above, canto xxviii.

CANTO XXXII.

(*Line* 2.) Then the last part of education will be — whatever is meant by that beatitude

of the pure in heart — seeing God rightly, of which I shall not speak to-day.

And in all these phases of education, the main point you observe is that it *should* be a beatitude: and that a man should learn 'χαίρειν ὀρθῶς:' and this rejoicing is above all things to be in actual sight; you have the truth exactly in the saying of Dante when he is brought before Beatrice in heaven, that his eyes 'satisfied themselves for their ten years' thirst.'

Eagle's Nest, Lect. ix. sec. 176, 177.

(*Line* 47.) [On picture by Carpaccio.] "Comparing the colours of the winged and four-footed parts of the 'animal binato' in the Purgatory, it is I believe important to notice that the statue of our Lord is gold, the dress of St. Jerome red and white, and over the shoulders a cape of the brown colour of earth."

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. i.

(*Line* 58.) Compare with this Greek incertitude the precision of the mediæval eye for colour. [In the terrestrial paradise] some three arrow flights farther up into the wood we come to a tall tree, which is at first barren, but, after

some little time, visibly opens into flowers, of a colour 'less than that of roses, but more than that of violets.'

It certainly would not be possible, in words, to come nearer to the *definition* of the exact hue which Dante meant — that of the apple-blossom. Had he employed any simple colour-phrase, as a 'pale pink,' or 'violet-pink,' or any other such combined expression, he still could not have completely got at the delicacy of the hue; he might perhaps have indicated its kind, but not its tenderness; but by taking the rose-leaf as the type of the delicate red, and then enfeebling this with the violet-gray, he gets, as closely as language can carry him, to the complete rendering of the vision, though it is evidently felt by him to be in its perfect beauty ineffable; and rightly so felt, for of all lovely things which grace the spring time in our fair temperate zone, I am not sure but this blossoming of the apple-tree is the fairest.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 46.

CANTO XXXIII.

(*Line* 119.) See above, canto xxviii.

PARADISO

PARADISO

Though in the Paradise there is perfect freedom and infinity of space, though for trenches we have planets, and for cornices constellations, yet there is more cadence, procession, and order among the redeemed souls than any others; they fly, so as to describe letters and sentences in the air, and rest in circles, like rainbows, or determinate figures, as of a cross and an eagle: in which certain of the more glorified natures are so arranged as to form the eye of the bird, while those most highly blessed are arranged with their white crowds in leaflets, so as to form the image of a white rose in the midst of heaven.

Thus, throughout the poem, I conceive that the first striking character of its scenery is intense definition.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. secs. 31, 32.

Dante's descriptions of virtue, while they include the ordinary formal divisions, are far too profound and extended to be brought under definition. Every line of the Paradiso is full

of the most exquisite and spiritual expressions of Christian truth; and that poem is only less read than the Inferno because it requires far greater attention, and, perhaps, for its full enjoyment, a holier heart.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. ch. viii. sec. lvii.

Dante's Paradise . . . only half estimated because few persons take the pains to think out its meaning.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. ch. viii. sec. lxii. note.

CANTO I.

(*Line* 48.) Dwell for a little while on this intense love of Dante for light, — taught, as he is at last by Beatrice, to gaze on the sun itself like an eagle.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 20.

(*Lines* 61, 81.) The scenery of Paradise begins with 'Day added to day,' the light of the sun so flooding the heavens, that 'never rain nor river made a lake so wide;' and throughout the Paradise all the beauty depends on spheres of light, or stars, never on clouds.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 20.

CANTO II.

(*Lines* 10–12.) [On a picture of St. Jerome by Carpaccio]. "I connect this with the few who have stretched their necks

> *Per tempo* al pan degli angeli, del quale
> vivesi qui, ma non sen vien satollo.

St. Jerome lives here by what *is* really the immortal bread; but shall not here be filled with it so as to hunger no more; and under his earthly cloak comprehends as little perhaps the Great Love he hungers after and is fed by, as his dog comprehends him. I am sure the dog is there with some such purpose of comparison. On that very last quoted passage of Dante, Landino's commentary (it was printed in Venice, 1491) annotates the words 'che drizzaste il collo,' with a quotation,

> Cum spectant animalia cetera terram
> Os homini sublime dedit, cœlum tueri jussit."
>
> Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. i.

(*Line* 112.) "I do not think Carpaccio thought of immortality in the symbols derived from mortal life, through which the ordinary

mind feels after it. Nor surely did Dante. See especially Paradiso iv. 27 and following lines.

"And think of the words in canto ii.:—

> Dentro dal ciel della Divina Pace
> si gira un corpo, nella cui virtute
> *l' esser di tutto suo contento* giace.

"But there is no use in heaping up passages, as the sense that in using human language he merely uses mystic metaphor is continually present in Dante, and often explicitly stated. And it is surely the error of regarding these picture writings for children who live in the nursery of Time and Space, as if they were the truth itself, which can be discovered only spiritually, that leads to the inconsistencies of thought and foolish talk of even good men."

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supplement i.

CANTO IV.

(*Line* 27.) See above.

CANTO VI.

(*Line* 128.) How [Charles] had got his wife, and her dowry, we must hear in Villani's

words, as nearly as I can give their force in English, only, instead of the English word pilgrim, I shall use the Italian 'romeo' for the sake both of all English Juliets, and that you may better understand the close of the sixth canto of the Paradise. . . .

"There came a romeo to court, returning from the shrine of St. James." I must stop again just to say that he ought to have been called a pellegrino, not a romeo, for the three kinds of wanderers are, Palmer, one who goes to the Holy Land; Pilgrim, one who goes to Spain; and Romeo, one who goes to Rome. Probably this romeo had been to both. "He stopped at Count Raymond's court, and was so wise and worthy (valoroso) and so won the Count's grace, that he made him his master and guide in all things.

"Who also, maintaining himself in honest and religious customs of life, in a little time, by his industry and good sense, doubled the Count's revenues three times over, maintaining always a great and honoured court. Now the Count had four daughters, and no son; and by the sense and provision of the good romeo — (I can do no better than translate 'procaccio'

provision, but it is only a makeshift for the word derived from procax, meaning the general talent of prudent impudence, in getting forward; 'forwardness' has a good deal of the true sense, only diluted;) — well, by the sense and — progressive faculty, shall we say? — of the good pilgrim, he first married the eldest daughter, by means of money, to the good King Louis of France, saying to the Count, 'Let me alone, — Lasciami-fare — and never mind the expense, for if you marry the first one well, I 'll marry you all the others cheaper, for her relationship.'

"And so it fell out, sure enough; for incontinently the King of England (Henry III.), because he was the King of France's relation, took the next daughter, Eleanor, for very little money indeed; next, his natural brother, elect king of the Romans, took the third; and, the youngest still remaining unmarried, — says the good romeo, 'Now for this one, I will you to have a strong man for son-in-law, who shall be thy heir;' — and so he brought it to pass. For finding Charles, Count of Anjou, brother of the King Louis, he said to Raymond, 'give her now to him, for his fate is to be the best

man in the world,' — prophesying of him. And so it was done. And after all this it came to pass, by envy which ruins all good, that the barons of Provence became jealous of the good romeo, and accused him to the Count of having ill-guided his goods, and made Raymond demand account of them. Then the good romeo said, 'Count, I have served thee long, and have put thee from little state into mighty, and for this, by false counsel of thy people, thou art little grateful. I came into thy court a poor romeo; I have lived honestly on thy means; now, make to be given to me my little mule and my staff and my wallet, as I came, and I will make thee quit of all my service.' The Count would not he should go; but for nothing would he stay; and so he came, and so he departed, that no one ever knew whence he had come, nor whither he went. It was the thought of many that he was indeed a sacred spirit."

This pilgrim, you are to notice, is put by Dante in the orb of Justice, as a just servant; the Emperor Justinian being the image of a just ruler.[1] *Val d'Arno*, Lect. ix. sec. 235–240.

[1] Romeo we see is placed by Dante *not* in the 'Orb of

CANTO X.

(*Line* 131.) "Bede's account of the Ayrshire seer's vision gives Purgatory in words very like Dante's description of the second stormy circle in Hell; and the angel which ultimately saves the Scotchman from the fiends comes through hell, 'quasi fulgor stellæ micantis inter tenebras' . . . 'qual sul presso del mattino Per gli grossi vapor Marte rossegia.'[1] Bede's name was great in the middle ages. Dante meets him in Heaven, and, I like to hope, may have been helped by the vision of my fellow-countryman more than six hundred years before."

Anderson, quoted in *Our Fathers have told us*, ch. iv. sec. 55, note.

(*Lines* 136–138.) A common idealist would have been rather alarmed at the thought of introducing the name of a street in Paris — Straw Street — Rue de Fouarre — into the midst of a description of the highest heavens. Not so

Justice' but here among the Spirits of those who for Love of Fame achieved great Deeds. Ed.

[1] *Purgatorio*, ii. 13, 14.

Dante,— . . . What did it matter to Dante, up in heaven there, whether the mob below thought him vulgar or not! Sigier *had* read in Straw Street; that was the fact, and he had to say so, and there an end.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. vii. sec. 8.

The paper reeds by the brooks, the flax-flower in the field, leave such imperishable fame behind them. And Ponte-della-Paglia, in Venice; and Straw Street, of Paris, remembered in Heaven, — there is no occasion to change their names, as one may have to change 'Waterloo Bridge,' or the 'Rue de l'Impératrice.'

Proserpina, ch. ix. sec. 12.

CANTO XI.

(*Lines* 49–117, 118–123.) [St. Francis,] the Apostle of Works, [St. Dominic,] of Faith. Each sent his little company of disciples to teach and to preach in Florence: St. Francis in 1212; St. Dominic in 1220.

The little companies were settled — one, ten minutes' walk east of the old Baptistery; the other five minutes' walk west of it. And after they had stayed quietly in such lodgings as were

given them, preaching and teaching through most of the century; and had got Florence, as it were, heated through, she burst out into Christian poetry and architecture, of which you have heard much talk: burst into bloom of Arnolfo, Giotto, Dante, Orcagna, and the like persons, whose works you profess to have come to Florence that you may see and understand.

Florence then, thus heated through, first helped her teachers to build finer churches. The Dominicans, or White Friars, the Teachers of Faith, began their church of St. Mary's in 1279. The Franciscans, or Black Friars, the teachers of Works, laid the first stone of this church of the Holy Cross in 1294. And the whole city laid the foundations of its new cathedral in 1298. The Dominicans designed their own building; but for the Franciscans and the town worked the first great master of Gothic art, Arnolfo; with Giotto[1] at his side, and Dante looking on, and whispering sometimes a word to both.

Mornings in Florence: the First. Comp. Second Morning.

(*Lines* 58 and 106.) See above, Inferno, canto xvii. on line 134.

[1] *Purgatorio*, xi. 95.

CANTO XII.

(*Lines* 32–111.) See above.

CANTOS XIV. TO XX.

See above, Inferno, canto vii. on lines 21–66.

CANTO XV.

(*Lines* 112–117, 121–126.) The root of all that is greatest in Christian art is struck in the thirteenth century; . . . the temper of that century is the life blood of all manly work thenceforward in Europe; and I suppose that one of its peculiar characteristics was elsewhere, as assuredly in Florence, a singular simplicity in domestic life:—

I saw Bellincion Berti walk abroad
In leathern girdle, and a clasp of bone;
And, with no artful colouring on her cheeks,
His lady leave the glass. The sons I saw
Of Verli and of Vecchio, well content
With unrobed jerkin, and their good dames handling
The spindle and the flax. . . .

One waked to tend the cradle, hushing it
With sounds that lulled the parents' infancy:

Another, with her maidens, drawing off
The tresses from the distaff, lectured them
Old tales of Troy, and Fesole, and Rome.

Stones of Venice, vol. ii. ch. vii. sec. xli.

The delicacy of sensation and refinements of imagination necessary to understand Christianity belong to the mid period when men risen from a life of brutal hardship are not yet fallen to one of brutal luxury. You can neither comprehend the character of Christ while you are chopping flints for tools, and gnawing raw bones for food; nor when you have ceased to do anything with either tools or hands, and dine on gilded capons. In Dante's lines [given above] . . . you have the expression of his sense of the increasing luxury of the age, already sapping its faith. But when Bellincion Berti walked abroad in skins not yet made into leather, and with the bones of his dinner in a heap at his door, instead of being cut into girdle clasps, he was just as far from capacity of being a Christian.

Val d'Arno, Lect. ii. sec. 54.

(*Line* 134.) Forty years ago, there was assuredly no spot of ground, out of Palestine, in

all the round world, on which, if you knew, even but a little, the true course of that world's history, you saw with so much joyful reverence the dawn of morning, as at the foot of the Tower of Giotto. For there the traditions of faith and hope, of both the Gentile and Jewish races, met for their beautiful labour: the Baptistery of Florence is the last building raised on earth by the descendants of the workmen taught by Dædalus: and the Tower of Giotto is the loveliest of those raised on earth under the inspiration of the men who lifted up the tabernacle in the wilderness.[1]

Of living Greek work there is none after the Florentine Baptistery; of living Christian work, none so perfect as the Tower of Giotto; and, under the gleam and shadow of their marbles, the morning light was haunted by the ghosts of the Father of Natural Science, Galileo; of Sacred Art, Angelico; and the Master of Sacred Song.

Mornings in Florence: the Sixth.

In the centre of Florence, the last great work of native Etruscan architecture, her Baptistery,

[1] See above, *Inferno*, canto xix. on line 17.

and the most perfect work of Christian architecture, her Campanile, stand within a hundred paces of each other: and from the foot of that Campanile, the last conditions of design which preceded the close of Christian art are seen in the dome of Brunelleschi.

Laws of Fésole, Preface.

CANTO XVI.

(*Line* 145.) At last the Arno dried up; or, at least, was reduced to the size of the Effra at Dulwich, with muddy shingle to the shore; and the grey 'pietra scema' of Fésole was like hot iron in the sun, sprinkled with sand.

Præterita, vol. ii. ch. vii.

(*Line* 152.) If any definite flower is meant by these triple groups of leaves, . . . it is the purple iris, or sometimes the yellow water flag. But in general, it means simply the springing of beautiful and orderly vegetation in fields upon which the dew falls pure. It is the expression, therefore, of peace on the redeemed and cultivated earth, and of the pleasure of heaven in the uncareful happiness of men clothed without labour, and fed without fear.

Val d'Arno, Lect. x. sec. 252.

Ornament of war was continually enriched by the curves of the triple petals of the Florentine 'giglio,' and French fleur-de-lys; so that it is impossible to count their influence for good in the middle ages, partly as a symbol of womanly character, and partly of the utmost brightness and refinement of chivalry in the city which was the flower of cities.

Queen of the Air, ii. sec. 82.

(*Line* 154.) The investiture of the lily of Florence with scarlet is a symbol — unintentional, observe, but not the less notable — of the recovery of human sense and intelligence in this matter. The reign of war was past; this was the sign of it; — the red glow, not now of the Towers of Dis,[1] but of the Carita,[2] 'che a pena fora dentro al fuoco nota.'

Val d'Arno, Lect. v. sec. 114.

(*Line* 25.) See above; and Inferno, canto xix.

CANTO XVIII.

(*Lines* 76–108.) See below, canto xx.

(*Line* 135.) See above, Inferno, canto xxx.

[1] *Inferno*, viii. 68–72. [2] *Purgatorio*, xxix. 123.

CANTO XIX.

(*Lines* 109–111.) The writings which we (verbally) esteem as divine, not only denounce the love of money as the source of all evil, and as an idolatry abhorred of the Deity, but declare mammon service to be the accurate and irreconcilable opposite of God's service; and, whenever they speak of riches absolute, and poverty absolute, declare woe to the rich, and blessing to the poor. Whereupon we forthwith investigate a science of becoming rich, as the shortest road to national prosperity.

> Tai Cristian dannera l'etiòpe
> quando si partiranno i due collegi,
> L'UNO IN ETERNO RICCO, E L' ALTRO INOPE.
>
> *Unto this Last*, Essay iii.

When Dante, in the nineteenth and twentieth books of the Paradise, gives his final interpretation of the law of human and divine justice in relation to the gospel of Christ — the lower and enslaved body of the heathen being represented by St. Philip's convert ('Christians like these the Ethiop shall condemn') — the noblest state of heathenism is at once chosen, as

by Giotto: 'What may the *Persians* say unto *your* kings?' *Mornings in Florence:* the Third.

CANTO XX.

(*Lines* 31–72.) Jurisprudence — and that of divine not human law. Which prudence is indeed of no mean order, holding itself, as it were, high in the air of heaven, and gazing for ever on the light of the sun of justice; hence the souls which have excelled in it are represented by Dante as stars forming in heaven for ever the figure of the eye of an eagle, they having been in life the discerners of light from darkness; or to the whole human race, as the light of the body, which is the eye; while those souls which form the wings of the bird (giving power and dominion to justice, 'healing in its wings') trace also in light the inscription in heaven:[1] 'DILIGITE JUSTITIAM QUI JUDICATIS TERRAM,' 'Ye who judge the earth, give' (not, observe, merely 'love,' but) 'diligent love to justice:' the love which seeks diligently, that is to say, choosingly, and by preference to all things else.

Unto this Last, Essay iii.

[1] xviii. 76–108.

CANTOS XXI. AND XXII.

(*Line* 106.) [My Cary's Dante] opened at a favourite old place, in the twenty-first canto of the Paradiso (marked with an M long ago, when I was reading Dante through to glean his mountain descriptions): —

> 'Twixt either shore
> Of Italy, nor distant from thy land, etc. ;

and I read on into the twenty-second canto, down to St. Benedict's, —

> There, all things are, as they have ever been ;
> Our ladder reaches even to that clime,
> Whither the Patriarch Jacob saw it stretch
> Its topmost round, when it appeared to him
> With angels laden. But to mount it now
> None lifts his foot from earth ; and hence my rule
> Is left a profitless stain upon the leaves.
> The walls, for abbey reared, turned into dens ;
> The cowls, to sacks choked up with musty meal.[1]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> His convent, Peter founded without gold
> Or silver ; I, with prayers and fasting, mine ;
> And Francis, his, in meek humility.
> And if thou note the point whence each proceeds,
> Then look what it hath erred to, thou shalt find
> The white turned murky.

[1] xxii. 66–78.

Jordan was turned back,
And a less wonder than the refluent sea
May, at God's pleasure, work amendment here.[1]

I stopped at this, (holding myself a brother of the third order of St. Francis) and began thinking how long it would take for any turn of tide by St. George's work, when a ray of light came gleaming in at the carriage window, and I saw, where the road turns into the high ravine of the glacier galleries, a little piece of the Breithorn snowfield beyond.

Somehow, I think, as fires never burn, so skies never clear, while they are watched; so I took up my Dante again, though scarcely caring to read more; and it opened, this time, not at an accustomed place at all, but at the 'I come to aid thy wish,' of St. Bernard, in the thirty-first canto.[2] Not an accustomed place, because I always think it very unkind of Beatrice to leave him to St. Bernard; and seldom turn expressly to the passage: but it has chanced lately to become of more significance to me, and I read on eagerly, to the 'So burned the peaceful oriflamme'[3] when the increasing light be-

[1] xxii. 88–96. [2] Line 65.
[3] xxxi. 127.

came so strong that it awaked me, like a new morning; and I closed the book.

Deucalion, ch. x. secs. 8, 9.

"In the 21st and 22d Cantos of the 'Paradiso,' Dante, too, connects the Dream of Jacob with the ascetic, living where 'è consecrato un ermo, che suole esser disposto a sola latria.'[1] This is in a sphere of heaven where 'la dolce sinfonia del Paradiso'[2] is heard by mortal ears only as overmastering thunder, and where the pilgrim is taught that no created vision, not the seraph's 'che in Dio piú l' occhio ha fisso'[3] may read that eternal statute by whose appointment spirits of the saints go forth upon their Master's business and return to Him again."

Anderson, quoted in *St. Mark's Rest*, Supp. ii. note.

CANTO XXV.

(*Line* 5.) See above, p. 24.

CANTO XXVIII.

(*Lines* 28–34.) The circle of the Powers of Heaven in the Byzantine rendering. I. Wis-

[1] xxi. 110. [2] xxi. 59. [3] xxi. 92.

dom; II. Thrones; III. Dominations; IV. Angels; V. Archangels; VI. Virtues; VII. Potentates; VIII. Princes; IX. Seraphim. In the Gregorian order[1] the Angels and Archangels are separated, giving altogether nine orders, but not ranks. Note that in the Byzantine circle the cherubim are first, and that it is the strength of the Virtues which calls on the dead to rise.[2]

Our Fathers have told us, ch. iv. sec. 36, note.

CANTO XXX.

(*Line* 117.) The rose is the most beautiful organism existing in matter not vital, expressive of the direct action of light on the earth, giving lovely form and colour at once; (compare the use of it by Dante, as the form of the sainted crowd in highest heaven).

Aratra Pentelici, Lect. iii. sec. 72.

(*Lines* 124–126.) The rose tribe, in which fruit and flower alike have been the types, to the highest races of men, of all passionate temp-

[1] See Cary's note.

[2] *St. Mark's Rest*, p. 80, and pp. 132, 133.

tation, or pure delight, from the coveting of Eve to the crowning of the Madonna, above the

> Rosa sempiterna,
> che si dilata, digrada e redole
> odor di lode al sol.
>
> *Queen of the Air*, ii. sec. 78.

CANTO XXXI.

(*Line* 93.) Beatrice [takes delight] in the sight of God's face.

And thus, when afterwards Dante sees Beatrice on her throne, and prays her that, when he himself shall die, she would receive him with kindness, Beatrice merely looks down for an instant, and answers with a single smile, then 'towards the eternal fountain turns.'

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xiv. sec. 37, 38.

(*Line* 118.) In this immitigable dislike of clouds, Dante goes somewhat beyond the general temper of his age. . . . In almost every representation of the heavenly paradise, these level clouds are set by the early painters for its floor, or for thrones of its angels; whereas Dante retains steadily, through circle after circle,

his cloudless thought, and concludes his painting of heaven, as he began it upon the purgatorial mountain,[1] with the image of shadowless morning:

> I raised my eyes, and as at morn is seen
> The horizon's eastern quarter to excel,
> So likewise, that pacific Oriflamb
> Glowed in the midmost, and toward every part
> With like gradation paled away its flame.

Modern Painters, vol. iii. ch. xv. sec. 21.

(*Lines* 65, 127.) See above, canto xxi.

[1] *Purgatorio*, ii. 7–9.

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